

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 279

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 13. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 279" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on June 20.

1 There were fountains of butterflies that flew glittering into the trees; there were pillars of coloured fires that rose and turned into eagles, or sailing ships, or a phalanx of flying swans; there was a red thunderstorm and a shower of yellow rain; there was a forest of silver spears that sprang suddenly into the air with a yell like an embattled army, and came down again into the Water with a hiss like a hundred hot snakes.

2 They were all gone: the squibs and catherine-wheels which Mrs Iglesden had hoarded so jealously from before the War; all my own purchases from Gamgo's - the Golden Fountain, the Jack-in-the-box, the Italian Streamer - there they lay, what remained of them, scattered over the street and garden: blackened burned-out bits of cardboard, their brief moment of glory already half-forgotten.

3 "I saw Rajahs and elephants with gold and silver trappings; and they lit all the fireworks at once, whereby eleven men were killed, my firework-maker among them."

Competition No 275

Winner: A. J. Smythe

Answers:

1 Now if you'd train a parrot, catch him young While soft the mouth and tractable the tongue. Old birds are fools; they doddle in their speech. More eager to forget than you to teach.  
J. E. Fletcher, "The Parrot".

2 "Parrot, Parrot, Parrot, pretty popinjay!" With my beak I can pick my little pretty toe; My delight is solace, pleasure, sport and play. Like a wanton, when I will, I reel to sad fro.  
John Skelton, "Speak Parrot".

3 Somewhere, somewhere I've seen But where or when I'll never know Parrots of shilly green With crests of shiller scarlet - flying Out of black cedars as the sun was dying Against cold peaks of snow.  
W. W. Gibson, "The Parrots".

## INFORMATION, PLEASE

*Gerard Manley Hopkins*: any information, letters, photographs, personal reminiscences, etc; for a biography to be published by Collins, London, and Putnam, New York.  
Robert Bernard Martin.  
8 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HG.

*James Drummond Smith* (1905-46), lecturer in economics, Aberdeen University and LSE, 1912-24; later businessman, chairman of Westbourne Engineering, 1936-46; and *Mary Benedita*, author of *A Girl in Print* (1937) and *The Street Markets of London* (with photographs by Moholy-Nagy); any information or recollections; for a memoir.  
Edward Smithies.  
Middlesex Polytechnic, All Saints, White Hart Lane, London N17 8HR.

*W. B. Yeats*: for a compilation, to be entitled "A Guide to the Manuscripts of W. B. Yeats", ie, a listing with location and brief description of known manuscripts of poems, plays, prose, letters; in addition, inscriptions, dedications, notes and marginalia by Yeats (eg, in books that he gave to his friends); information from individuals and institutions with such holdings.  
Conrad A. Baillet.  
Department of English, Wittenberg University, Box 720, Springfield, OH 45501, USA.

*George Borrow* and *John Bowring*: present whereabouts of Borrow's letters to Bowring, published by Jenkins (1912) and Shewell (1913), who were lent the correspondence by John Bowring's grandson, Wilfrid J. Bowring, for an edition of Borrow's letters.  
Angus Fraser.  
84 Ennerdale Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 2DL.

*Oculus pictus*: any material (pictures, illustrations, letters, etc) about the Eye Motive in painting since 1800.  
Asrit Schmidt-Burkhardt.  
Goethestrasse 16a, 1000 West Berlin 12, German Federal Republic.

*Allegorical maps* (eg, the so-called "Carte de Tendre"): any information about English examples before 1850.  
Franz Reifinger.  
Leonfeldnerstrasse 48, A-4040 Linz, Austria.

*Rev. John George Wood* (1827-89), writer of popular natural history books and articles; any information on the whereabouts of letters, manuscripts and documents relating to him or his descendants.  
Ellen B. Wells.  
Smithsonian Institution Libraries, MAH 306, Washington, DC 20560, USA.

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## The Times Literary Supplement

May 30 1986 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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Cover picture  
Elevation of Nos. 39 and 41 Harrington Gardens by the architects Ernest George and Peto, 1882-3. The drawing is reproduced from *Survey of London, Volume XLII: Southern Kensington: Kensington Square to Earl's Court*, which is published under the general editorship of Hermione Hobhouse, and will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

## In search of the Thatcher factor

Peter Jay

ALAN WALTERS  
*Britain's Economic Renaissance: Margaret Thatcher's reforms 1979-1984*  
200pp. Oxford University Press. £19.50.  
019 5327391

Sir Alan Walters is a British academic economist who took an early interest in Milton Friedman's "monetarist" theories before they were fashionable, who served as a personal economic "advisor" [sic] to Mrs Thatcher at 10 Downing Street from 1981 and who has since been based in Washington, as a resident-fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, a respectable and well-endowed lobby for right-wing economic ideology. Not surprisingly his book is designed to show that his theories were right, that his leader deserves the political credit for implementing them in defiance of a lamentable inheritance and a hostile "ambient" academic culture and that, in consequence, Britain has enjoyed "a minor economic miracle".

Readers of *Britain's Economic Renaissance* are warned in the prologue that "there are no revelations in this book. It is neither a diary nor a denouement. It is just a plain old piece of applied economics." The negatives are true; the positive is false. It is a plain old piece of political propaganda, written in the style of British casual empiricism at its most casual and least empirical. Thus, for example: "We are left, therefore, with no simple explanations of Britain's productivity. There must be some missing factor - a Thatcher factor? - which explains this dramatic reversal in Britain's performance." Or, "There remains the Thatcher factor - the compendium of ambient macroeconomic stability and microeconomic reform. On general grounds it seems likely, to put it no higher, that productivity must respond favourably under conditions of increased stability and freedom." Or, "This view [that a cure may have been found for the British disease] has been reinforced by many anecdotes from British boardrooms and managers and even the shopfloor".

Sir Alan's writing style is accessible to all, though his intermittent American spelling - "favorable" but also "favourably"; and vocabulary - "envision" (used interchangeably with "envisage"); his chronically split infinitives - "to more than counter"; and his other solecisms (Sir Harold McMillan) may not suit every-

one's taste. The book, indeed, is the kind of extended essay that a busy man, who has already made his reputation, who knows what he thinks and that what he thinks must be basically right and who is under pressure from his publisher to produce "a title" and from his sponsor to advance "the cause", may be expected to write.

The propaganda thrust of the work is threefold: that "monetarist" macroeconomics, combined with market-based microeconomics, is intellectually superior to "post-Keynesian" or "fiscalist" macroeconomics and "interventionist" microeconomics; that Mrs Thatcher, in

lower level of unemployment than would otherwise occur.

I shall leave it to the "post-Keynesians" and "fiscalists", who are much better qualified both technically and by conviction, to do battle with Sir Alan over his arguments with them about the comparative effects of fiscal and monetary expansion on real economic activity. But, more seriously for him, he will have also to deal with the embarrassment of the Chancellor's having, since his 1985 Mansion House speech, abandoned the fundamental tenets of Friedman's monetarism and, in his 1986 budget, implicitly embraced much of the "post-



"The Bliddenden Maids' Chanty", given on Easter Monday, reproduced from *The Customs and Ceremonies of Britain: An encyclopedia of living traditions* by Charles Nightingale (248pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.50. 0 500 25096 0).

the grip of these convictions, turned the direction of British policy from the one to the other; and that the result has been the "Renaissance" of the title and the "miracle" of the concluding chapter.

Since the last two and parts of the first of these contentions are rubbish, it is as well first to acknowledge what is true, if scarcely as controversial or unpopular as Sir Alan's portrayal of himself as a David surrounded by Goliaths invites us to suppose. It is true that, if government print too much money, inflation will in due course follow; and it is true that printing too much money does not secure a sustainably

Keynesian" compromise that both Sir Alan and I deplore. (Mrs Thatcher's recent speech in Perth will no doubt also find difficult to justify.)

Sir Alan's interpretation of monetarist macroeconomics is beretrical and invites the suspicion that it has been doctored to rationalize the actions of the Government he served. For example, he presents, as Ministers did, as the centre piece of the Government's plans for "macroeconomic stability" the Medium Term Financial Strategy, whose "objective was primarily the reduction in the rate of inflation"; and he does not disguise the fact that the pro-

gressive reduction of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (that is, the budget deficit as currently interpreted) was the essence of that strategy. Yet, there is absolutely nothing in Friedman's monetarism to suggest that the size of the budget deficit is the determining factor for inflation or even very important at all. On the contrary, monetarist doctrine has seen the rate of change in the money supply as the decisive factor and budget deficits as important only in so far as governments fail to cover them by genuine borrowing rather than by printing money.

The massive explosion of the money supply in Mrs Thatcher's first year, and the simultaneous leap in inflation from an inherited 8 per cent to something over 20 per cent, were not the acts of a "monetarist" administration, though they were not incompatible with the principles of the embryonic MTFs, as finally launched publicly in March, 1980. There are good and powerful arguments for limiting the public sector's claims on private savings - chiefly, that funding them by genuine borrowing will drive up interest rates and "crowd out" other, possibly more fruitful, private borrowing; but they have nothing to do with fighting inflation or with monetarism in its proper and valid sense.

Similarly, Sir Alan plays fast and loose with the very concept of market-based microeconomics. We may presume that his own approach is based on broad classical principles, judging by his statement in the preface that

the errors of received doctrine are simple and basic rather than sophisticated and esoteric. Similarly the reform of ideas and policy owes much to the central prepositions of the theory of demand and supply and little to explorations in mathematics and econometrics.

So, what are we to make of his contention, unsupported even by footnotes, that "both experience and scholarly study had shown that the state industries were overmighty and tended to be used by powerful unions and other special interests for extortion and political purposes. The general policy of the government was to return these industries to the people" (a somewhat less than clinical description of denationalization)?

What classical principles actually said was rather different. Both private enterprise, under conditions of perfect competition, as well as public ownership of monopolies, offered acceptable models of efficient economic operation and accountability to the people, whether as consumers or as voters. But

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private monopoly, it argued, was unacceptable at any price. In so far as the privatization programme had the purpose and result of creating, not private competitive markets, but private monopolies, it was flying in the face of the central propositions of classical theory on which Sir Alan purports to have relied.

These would be less damaging distortions were it not that their effect is to give credence to Sir Alan's most pernicious notion, namely that the ideologies and programmes of political parties are rooted in coherent economic philosophies which, give or take a bit, they may be expected to implement. This is dangerous nonsense, since, as he ought to know as a member in good standing of the American academic radical right, political parties are more accurately regarded as vendors in the electoral marketplace, whose programmes reflect a balance between the vested interests of their hard-core supporters and the compromises called for by their more prudent electoral agents in order to attract floating voters.

Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Party is no more actuated by a coherent economic philosophy of market forces when it hands over vast monopolies at attractive prices to its supporters than the Labour Party is motivated by some coherent philosophy of workers' liberation when it confers top-sliced legal immunities upon trade unions.

It is in this same urge on Sir Alan's part to justify, not merely his convictions, but also his Party, which leads him to misrepresent grotesquely the history of the birth of monetarism as a government programme in Britain. He presents 1979 as the watershed year, simply because there was then a change of government. As Samuel Brittan pointed out in his *The Role and Limits of Government* (1983), "if one looks at broad strategy and at actions rather than political rhetoric, it is clear that the fundamental change in policy took place not after the election, but in 1976, less than halfway through the term of the Labour Government".

Sir Alan's cruder claims for the originality of 1979 are planted where the casual reader is most likely to find them, on the dust-jacket, in the prologue and in the conclusions:

As the recession intensified in 1980-1 Margaret Thatcher took a bold departure from the traditional dictates of the prevailing Keynesian economic doctrine: she did not increase the fiscal deficit to "increase aggregate demand" ... she did exactly the opposite.

Mrs Thatcher's government of 1979-83 was only the start of this long programme of reform.

The first main change to the economic environment of 1979-83 was the commitment to contain inflation by the MTFFs. The main lesson - still rather tentative - is the power of monetary policy compared with the relative impotence of, in Keynesian terms, even perverted, the effects of fiscal policy.

The decline of Keynesianism and the rise of monetarism as the principle of macroeconomic policies actually occurred much earlier and had nothing to do with the ebb and flow of party politics. (It had even less to do with Margaret Thatcher, who was one of the latest and least perfect converts, always preferring her grocer's daughter's microeconomic reflexes and values to any economic theory.) It was James Callaghan's budget of 1967 which actually first broke explicitly and obviously from the Keynesian "full employment" standard for what was then called the "budget judgment" and provoked a leader in *The Times*, whose Economics Editor I was at the time, called "The End of the Keynesian Era". From 1968 onwards first *The Times* and then the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* began seriously discussing Friedman's ideas and reporting monetary aggregate statistics.

The first signs that any of this was getting through to the politicians came in Denis Healey's crucially important speech in East London in January 1975, when he expounded the central idea of Friedman's justly celebrated 1968 Presidential Address to the American Economic Association. This idea was that monetary policy must be geared uniquely to a progressive reduction of inflation, and that any reduction in unemployment must come from somehow moderating the growth of real pay. This turned the conventional post-war approach to incomes policies (namely that the benefit of pay restraint was to be shared) on its head by gearing fiscal and monetary

policy to an inflation rather than an employment standard and linking pay policy and behaviour to employment rather than inflation.

This, of course, is the approach which Sir Alan himself favours analytically, though he has no time for government exhortation of commands to achieve the reduction in real pay which he rightly sees as the key to higher employment. But, if he had understood better what Healey had said in 1975 and the Labour Government's subsequent successful anti-inflation policy and fairly unsuccessful employment policy between 1976 and 1979, he would neither have misplaced by three or four years the real watershed in British macroeconomic policy nor have had to profess himself so utterly baffled - "I can find no plausible explanation for the increases in real pay" - about pay behaviour in the present decade and the consequent high unemployment.

If Healey was the first, he was followed soon after by Sir Keith Joseph's great "recantation" speech and by Callaghan's definitive burial of demand management. "We cannot now, if we ever could, speed our way out of recession" - at the Labour Party Conference, of all places, in the autumn of 1976. This is the speech Friedman has most frequently quoted with approval of any delivered by any politician anywhere. The words were followed by deeds almost precisely such as Friedman recommended at the time, namely by a progressive reduction over three years in the rate of increase in the money supply (as then universally measured), which brought inflation down from the 30 per cent inherited from Edward Heath's and Anthony Barber's monetary explosion between 1971 and 1974 to the single figures bequeathed to Mrs Thatcher. Unemployment certainly rose sharply, though not as sharply as in the 1980s when no concerted attempt was made to discourage workers from pricing themselves out of their jobs.

In the smaller print of his book, where casual readers are less likely to find it, Sir Alan does in fact acknowledge some of this:

In 1975-6, for example, Britain witnessed the development of monetary targets and the eschewing of finely tuned fiscal policy. The Medium Term Financial Strategy of the government of Mrs Thatcher was a fiscal descent (sic) of the brave measures of Mr Healey.

Unemployment did stop rising [in 1979] ... Whether this slight improvement was due to the fiscal measures of 1978 [which Sir Alan does not believe] or whether it was the result of the early and "successful" stages of incomes policy that had been so prominent a part of the 1976 policy must be left to conjecture.

Even here, Sir Alan, anxious as ever to make his Party points, tries to attribute the intellectual coconversion of 1975-6 to pressures from the IMF at the end of 1976; and when he has to concede that the IMF's approach had been "anticipated ... some months earlier", it is to the Treasury rather than to ministers that he awards the credit.

But the most seriously false message of the whole book is the suggestion in the title and somewhat more tentatively in the text, that Britain has enjoyed a "minor miracle"; and, perhaps, found the cure for the "British disease".

Sir Alan's essential case is this: sound financial policies have been followed, accompanied by privatization, deregulation and trade union legislation; inflation has fallen to 5 per cent. He glosses over the monetary chaos of Mrs Thatcher's first year, by blaming the 20 per cent inflation which accompanied it on the post-Winter of Discontent pay settlements which were "in the pipeline", although he admits that it was his heroine's pre-election pledge to honour these, as well as her actual decision to do so, which caused the damage; and productivity in manufacturing, which he takes as a proxy for the economy as a whole, has risen impressively in the present decade in contrast with the 1970s. He blames the high unemployment on excessive real pay, which he professes himself unable to explain, except on the "speculation" that workers have overestimated probable future inflation and even this he admits is implausible after the rate of inflation settled down three years ago at about 3 per cent.

In his enthusiasm to prove a miracle, Sir Alan seems to have forgotten that the only "miracle" he himself was namely how to combine a

level of employment with stability of prices. Every government since the wartime coalition's Employment Policy White Paper, and indeed long before, has known that you could achieve price stability by accepting very high levels of unemployment. Their delusion, until the monetarist revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s, was to think that you could achieve high employment by accepting stable, if high, levels of inflation.

Once it was realized that the price to be paid was not a level, but a rate of acceleration, of inflation, the notion of a fiscally guaranteed high employment level collapsed. What the change of strategy since 1975-6 (not 1979) has meant is that governments simply have to embrace, having little choice, a high level of unemployment. The real problem is why, in Britain, such a high level of unemployment should be associated with financial stability. The answer, clearly enough, lies in the monopolistic price-setting of labour, reinforced by all the other cartels and competitive imperfections of the still hidebound British economy - for example that after nearly seven years of Mrs Thatcher's government, we still do not have even the ghost of a serious anti-trust, or competition, law.

What Sir Alan refuses to face - and hence his great bafflement about the behaviour of real pay - is that no serious structural changes have been introduced to make the supply of labour any less monopolistic. Of course actual labour prices advance less rapidly so long as government does not print the money to validate excessive rises; but the consequence is that the labour market does not clear or, in other words, that unemployment rises to a very high level and stays there. To interpret the evidence of tamer pay behaviour in a buyer's market for labour as evidence that such behaviour would continue once a seller's market was created is to fall into the classic error of confusing movement along a curve with an actual shift in the curve itself.

The government's trade-union legislation, necessary and benign as it may have been in terms of members' civil rights and of the emancipation of the Labour Party leadership from dark forces, has left the basic structure of conventional collective bargaining untouched. And it is conventional collective bargaining, not "loony left" excess, which is the essence of monopolistic labour supply.

No matter how fast productivity advances,

## How we beat us

Adam Hodgkin

STEVEN LUKES and ITZHAK GALNOOR  
*No Laughing Matter: A collection of political jokes*  
177pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £7.95.  
0710099657

In their brief introduction, Steven Lukes and Itzhak Galnoor quote Mark Twain to the effect that a German joke is no laughing matter. In his brief foreword, George Mikos says that it is about time that jokes, particularly political jokes, were taken seriously. This anthology of 500 political jokes might form the raw material for some theoretical study of the form and function of humour in politics, but this is not Lukes' and Galnoor's intention. Like an experienced after-dinner speaker, they know that it is their task to get on with the entertainment after a minimum of preamble and apparatus.

The jokes are collected under five principal headings: "Politics and Joking", "Boundaries and Identity", "Debunking and Unmaking", "Power and Resistance", and "Facts of Life". The last is a useful portmanteau into which the compilers can be expected to stuff any good things which did not fit in earlier, as well as one or two which rather clearly do belong elsewhere in the book. As for example, the reported conversation between two Soviet Jews about the Six Day War (they did you hear how we beat it?). This is about the options of the Jewish people and identity, and it may be

even supposing that it could be sustained on the marginal 10 per cent of the available labour forces was re-employed, so progress at all would have been made towards solving the problem of restoring high employment without relaunching inflation. Nor does the platitudeous fact that the economy, having once got down to - or near to - the "natural" rate of unemployment, can bump along the bottom, with annual rises in national output in line with the gains in productivity growth, provide any evidence whatever of recovery, let alone a renaissance, in the only sense which is relevant to the problem as posed: how to restore high employment without inflation.

Sir Alan is absolutely right to see the key to being pay behaviour, as did Healey and Callaghan in 1975 and 1976. But simply to profess himself mystified about why pay does not now behave in the way in which it would have to behave for his thesis of "miracle" to succeed is hardly an argument for saying that it has succeeded or is succeeding. That behaviour - and what it would be under conditions of high employment - is the problem.

An economist who says he cannot understand it, who rules out any form of concerted pay restraint and who has no radical structures to propose - for example of the kind discussed by James Meade, Martin Weitzman and others for giving employees a large stake in the profits (or lack of them) of enterprises, in lieu of some of their fixed pay - cannot claim to have addressed, let alone to have solved, or to have advised a government which has solved, the problem. Meanwhile, the cost of not finding a solution is that a tenth or a fifth of the Gross National Product is not being produced every year because of the need to run the economy indefinitely at a "natural rate of employment". This is equivalent to producing about 85-90 per cent of full economic capacity. A solution would be enough to solve virtually all other known material problems confronting the nation.

This is neither a miracle nor a renaissance, it is a tragedy and a treason; and this 1976-86 economic experiment has nothing useful to do with party politics. Whereas it is the job of politicians to play electoral games for office and success, it is the job of economists to produce solutions to the problems of government and society. So far, they have failed; and Sir Alan's political panegyric can only divert them from their task.

grateful to the editors for having interpreted their subject broadly, since it is obviously more important to have samples of a good vintage than to be restricted to the narrowly political. There are many more jokes about Soviet leaders than about American Presidents, and precious few about British ministers - only two mentions of Gerald Ford, none at all of Churchill. These omissions cannot be simply explained by the fact that this is not a collection of political wit or anecdote. There are plenty of good jokes for which Churchill was the target or the source. The anthology contains more mentions of Brezhnev than of Khrushchev, and, since there are more Khrushchev jokes than Stalin jokes, one is tempted to suppose that a dictator's propensity to be the butt of humour and mockery is inversely related to his vivacity. This is corroborated by the presence of jokes about such otherwise forgettable and grey characters as Salazar, Vorster and Pinochet.

Many good jokes have the wisdom of riddles. I enjoyed the Soviet satirical classifications of schools of painters. The impressionist paints what he feels, the Impressionist paints what he sees, and the socialist realist paints what he hears. Not so funny, but quite sharp, is the joke with which they conclude the book: Question: Will there be a Third World War? Answer: No, but there will be such a struggle for peace that not a stone will be left standing.

Lukes and Galnoor have collected some good jokes but it may be that their book is not a missed opportunity. This subject is not simply a laughing matter. An analytical essay might have found the key to the apparent randomness of the jokes. But, as Amos Rapoport has pointed out, the recommended minimum standard of housing in the United States is 340 square feet per person, while in Europe it is 170, and in Hong Kong 43 is thought quite reasonable. He might equally have noticed that the Lower East Side of New York in the 1890s had 500,000 inhabitants to the square mile, so that it was populated at least as densely as Hoeg Kong today. Circumstances alter cases. But whether people like or hate their cities can have profound effects for the society and for its politics. That has been nowhere truer than in America since the Second World War, and it may be becoming equally true in Britain. Kenneth Fox is a political scientist and the central theme of his history, *Metropolitan America*, is an important one, as much for a British as for an American readership: it is an account of the development, during the 1960s and 1970s, of an urban crisis in American society and politics.

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In the 1950s, America underwent a huge transformation: the old division between a white-collar business class and a much larger blue-collar working class was superseded by the development of a new suburban middle class, distinguished no longer by occupation but by "life style", above all by its concern with child-rearing and the material symbols of affluence. Still, the cities remained serene and stable places - as can be seen in Edward Hopper's contemporary paintings of New York scenes. But that, as Professor Fox puts it, was before the deluge.

By the end of the decade suburbanization had left a new underclass, predominantly black, trapped in the old inner cities. And in the 1960s it erupted in riots. Fox reviews the official explanations of the time, and offers his own interpretation: he believes that the riots were about status and power. Edward Banfield's celebrated (but not here cited) article, "Rioting Mainly for Fun and Profit", is both near and wide of the mark: blacks enjoyed the fact that they were centre-stage, and they were determined to show that they were able to influence events. The outcome of the riots was not black invasion of the white suburbs, but black control of the cities. Subsequently, President Johnson tried to enlist a constituency of poor urban blacks to reconstruct their own cities through local community development; Presidents Nixon and Ford went along with this approach, because they saw it as the way to shift the burden of urban revival from central government in Washington to the cities themselves. The new aim was the co-operation of public and private in pursuit of urban economic development: an approach that made traditional town planners decidedly uncomfortable.

The story of urban Britain in the 1980s is uncannily similar to that of urban America in the 1970s. This makes Fox's final chapter especially arresting. The outward movement of people and jobs has created an America of almost uniform suburbanization, in which the older inner cities perform at most a specialized role. The US economy is becoming diffused rather than concentrated geographically - as is symbolized by the new electronic cottage industry. Society is marked by a disintegration of traditional class structures and gender roles. Within it, there is a new underclass of young unemployed blacks and poor single mothers. By May 1983, with overall unemployment at just under 10 per cent, black teenage unemployment was nearly 47 per cent. These young blacks, Fox explains, were looking for jobs which did not exist. Single-parent families, a prominent feature for several decades past, increased among blacks during the 1970s from 0.9 to 1.9 million; among whites, where they had been proportionately far less common, they doubled from 2.0 to 3.9 million. The result was what sociologists have come to call the "feminization of poverty": a product of the absence of two incomes, continuing sexual pay differences, and child care demands. The new diffused economy (including the electronic cottage industry) has not yet evolved to meet the capabilities and needs of the new female population.

Meanwhile it was a Democratic administration, under President Carter, that achieved the extraordinary feat of publicly abandoning America's cities to their historic fate. A major policy report of 1978 concluded that, rather than trying to arrest the decline of the cities, public policy should actually assist it: limited federal funds should be used to speed the transformation.

Metropolitan America, which explains the basic theories and skills needed for the sport, with advice for the more advanced covering racing to building boards.

## Unreal city

Peter Hall

ANDREW LEES  
*Cities Perceived: Urban society in European and American thought, 1820-1940*  
300pp. Manchester University Press, £25.

EDWARD KRUPAT  
*People in Cities: The urban environment and its effects*  
215pp. Cambridge University Press, £27.50 (paperback, £8.95).

KENNETH FOX  
*Metropolitan America: Urban life and urban policy in the United States 1940-1980*  
244pp. Macmillan, £25 (paperback, £7.95).

In *Cities Perceived* Andrew Lees reminds us that, in any given period, a few sensitive Americans have always become estranged from their own cities. Henry James, perhaps the most distinguished of them, gazed with distaste at the turn of the century on the new skyscrapers that had transformed his native New York. He found them "crowded not only with its history, but with no possibility of time for history, and consecrated by no uses save the commercial at my cost". And, nearly thirty years earlier, he had already been sufficiently alienated to take up an almost permanent exile in London, a metropolis he found infinitely more congenial.

By 1905 James had, perhaps unconsciously, in part absorbed the hostility to new urban development then fashionable in Europe, though he of his compatriots shared his concern. Most American cities were then so new that they did not convey the feelings of aesthetic and cultural decline that so obsessed contemporary observers in Britain, Germany and France. Paris fascinated Baudelaire, because in physical and moral degradation provided him with new material for his art; for Walt Whitman, New York provided an entirely opposite stimulus of "continued exaltation and absolute fulfillment". Apart from lone voices, such as James's, it is not until the publication of Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities* (1938) that we find New York inspiring a vision of the inseparable commercial megalopolis, marked by "pawling and shapelessness as an inevitable by-product of its physical immensity", and portraying the triumph of totalitarian militarism. And Mumford, like James before him, found in London or Paris or Rome some vestiges of an earlier urban golden age.

Then and since, opinions have differed. Edward Krupat, a psychologist, shows in *People in Cities* that contemporary visions of New York are highly subjective, ranging from the ecstatic to the execratory. One observer is "more comfortable in a subway than a field"; Dr Krupat, who once enjoyed it, tells us that the city finds it too hectic. He believes that it depends on what you are used to - if you like a lot of stress anyway, somewhere like New York is the place for you. But that would have been as true in 1886 as in 1986. The really interesting question is when and why images of the city change. Professor Lees addresses this question as a historian and concludes that attitudes were seldom so clear-cut, most observers have reacted to big cities to some extent negatively and to some extent positively. Writers, artists, clergymen and doctors tended to be against; social scientists and architect-planners were more willing to accept the city as it was, while trying at the same time to improve it.

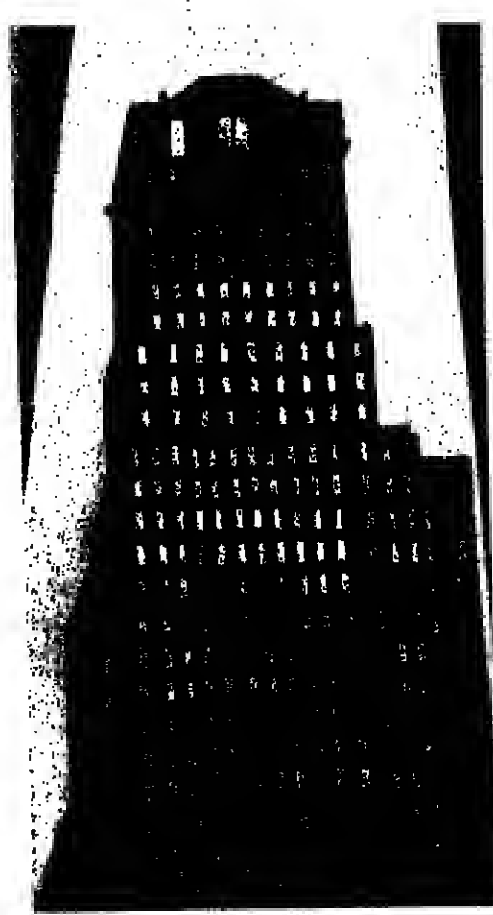
Attacking the city's evils, cultural conservatives like William Morris, Oswald Spengler and James made common cause with left-wing writers from Engels to Orwell: the defenders were mainly found in the ideological centre. Germany produced the most passionate anti-urban feeling, Britain the next, France less so. America the least of all. And anti-urban feeling ran in cycles: strong in the 1840s and the 1880s and the interwar years, less so in the periods in between.

Krupat avoids these categories; his personal typology is in a timeless continuum. Crowding, noise, pollution, commuting can all create stress. But whether people become stressed will depend on the people themselves. Callaghan's celebrated laboratory rats all behaved pathologically when they were crowded together in a small space. But, as Amos Rapoport

sition to a post-industrial economy, in which shrunken cities would play their new role as nodal centres for the performance of specialized functions such as financial services, education and government. The big city mayors, naturally, were less than pleased. But, as Fox acknowledges in the title of his closing chapter, Carter was simply recognizing that the cities were now a spent force, of little political value and that the time had come to say goodbye to Metropolis.

Professor Fox's book ends at 1980. But an appendix would not tell any new story. The fact is that progressively, since the late 1960s, American governments of both political persuasions have quietly been leaving the cities to go their own way. Fewer and fewer Americans live, work and above all vote in them. More and more Americans regard them as outdated: the residual repositories of the unsuccessful, the poor, the problematic. Anti-urbanism, once a European affectation, has now become the all-pervasive American attitude.

The same of course is increasingly true on the other side of the Atlantic. In Britain, too - even though it is some years behind America - there is a diffuse economy and a new class basis to society, in which the cities represent an embarrassing historical relic. These changes, as in America, have a crucial political expression: Labour's vote in 1983 had, in the main, shrunk to a declining urban base, while the Conservatives and the Alliance fought over the suburbs and the exurbs. The abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan Counties, and the increasingly ferocious battles between Westminster and the big cities, represent the last act of a great political drama that began with the enfranchisement of the new industrial towns a century and half ago. Britain, too, may be about to bid goodbye to Metropolis.



The Shelton Hotel, New York, reproduced from *The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe* by Jan Garden Castro, to be published on June 12 (192pp, with more than 70 colour illustrations. Virago, £20.00 080087376). As well as letters and interviews this study of O'Keeffe's life and work includes many photographs of her at various stages of her life by Alfred Steiglitz.

### June Books

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#### THE MAGIC COTTAGE

James Herbert

From the author of the international bestseller *The Rats*, a modern tale of horror and magic that climbs from a seemingly innocent beginning to a spine-chilling climax. £9.95

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A powerful, moving avocation of enduring love and friendship between one woman and two men, spanning the 1940s in Germany and Switzerland through to contemporary New York and Europe. £10.95

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Jeff Toghiani

A clear, concise and fully illustrated guide to sailboarding which explains the basic theories and skills needed for the sport, with advice for the more advanced covering racing to building boards. Illustrated £4.95

Hodder & Stoughton







# The traveller as trickster

Gerald Mangan

ARTELLA COURT  
Puck of the Droms: The lives and literature of  
the Irish Tinkers  
297pp. University of California Press. £21.25.  
0520 037111

As itinerant workers and traders, singers and musicians, craftsmen and beggars, tellers of tales and fortunes, the tinkers or "travelling people" have for long occupied a place in Irish society (and in rural Scotland) roughly equivalent to that of the gypsy in England. Their role has often been more conspicuous and controversial, and they have suffered more from official harassment than commercial romanticization; but the cultural heritage of this self-styled "puck of the droms" (trickster of the roads) is also much more indigenously Celtic, and its links with the Romany tradition are demonstrably tenuous. As the custodians of a vanishing native folklore, they have been recognized by Irish scholars more than by Gypsy specialists; but a separate survey of their lives and literature has long been overdue.

*Puck of the Droms* fills a large part of the gap. The three oral memoirs that make up the best part of it were recorded by American folklorist Arrella Court during visits to Ireland between 1965 and 1973, and the delay in publication is not fully explained by the fifty pages of introduction, or the ninety pages of glossary and notes. In the interval, so much of integrity and vitality has gone from the traveller communities, whose bough-tents are now invaded by colour television, that the material enshrined here may have been gathered in the nick of time. It is a monumental work, which already looks like a monument over a communal grave.

The longest of the three autobiographies is given by Patrick Stokes, a Roscommon-born labourer and former tinsmith, then in his thirties, living with his wife and five daughters in a sack-tent outside Dublin. Drawing on a typically elastic memory, which enables him to reproduce the precise words of a conversation twenty years old, he gives a fluent and highly entertaining account of his life as a tin-trader, cow-herd, roof-hatcher, poacher, thief, tippler and self-confessed liar. ("If you have the name of being an early riser", he begins, "you can sleep forever. I often told a man the truth, and he wouldn't believe me...")

Enlivened by a truly puckish sense of logic, Stokes's monologue offers a striking example of a rural imagination that lives simultaneously in fact and fiction; in present and past; and he is a master of a whole range of narrative devices that present magical folktales as episodes of first-hand experience. Ghosts are as real a menace as tent-fires, rats and municipal bulldozers, and are often more comprehensible than the insults of policemen, the rapacity of landowners, the spite of bureaucrats or the parsimony of the clergy.

In their attitudes to the values of the "settled" community, the other memoirs represent two opposing extremes. A former hawkerman descended from a Wicklow farmer, Bridget Murphy is the only householder, and devout Catholic of the three, and she gives a more drily factual account of her early hardships on the road. Her pragmatism is probably coloured by a need to justify her reversion to settled ways, and it contrasts sharply with the stubborn pride of the oldest narrator. The life-story of Johnny Cassidy, a Wexford storyteller from a long line, is little more than the history of a life of stories, and a preface to the six tales he produces from his repertoire. Religiously revered and regularly aired, his literary inheritance is plainly his real ancestral home, far more valuable and secure than the sheet-metal hut that houses his brood of children.

Stories and songs from a variety of traveller sources are interpolated, in italics, throughout the first two memoirs. They are often placed quite clumsily, breaking the flow of an anecdote where they mean to enlarge its significance, but they are the richest feature of the book, and alone would provide a detailed picture of traveller customs, occupations, beliefs and fantasies. In one of the best-known stories, their history of misfortunes is traced back to a tinker who made the rails for the Crucifixion.

but the predominant type is one in which cunning or sheer luck enables the trickster hero to outwit a figure of authority or brute power - a giant, a ghost, a priest, a landowner, an Englishman, and so on. Apart from celebrations of confidence-scams and clan-battles, such wish-fulfillment is more rare in the songs, which conform to the more familiar Irish modes of yesming and regret. Many of the ballads reprinted here, of courtship and bereavement and homesickness ("Carrickfergus", "Molly Bawn"), have long been classics of the folk repertoire.

Court tells us that she approached the families "as an amateur, in friendship", and I would imagine that she conversed with them in tones rather different from her introduction. In her meticulous account of their lives, which includes their diet and personal hygiene as well as trade-routes, marriage-customs, superstitions and family rivalries, her obvious sympathy is submerged by a rather strenuous professional formality, and too much of it is a polysyllabic translation of what they themselves state quite plainly.

Speculating on the tinkers' historical origins, she is well-informed but elaborately cautious. She chooses a plausible starting-point in the dissolution of the ancient Celtic hierarchies,

which made fellow-outcasts of the exalted hard and the lowly metal-worker, but the argument is confused by the more recent history of colonial exploitation, which reduced the entire peasantry to the status of nomads and mendicants. Unlike the founding-fathers of the Free State, she is quite certain that their roots are Irish, but the strongest proof she can find is in their secret language of Shelta, known to be a cleverly garbled form of Gaelic. In this end, she is unable to discount the evidence of Romany affinities, which she sums up as "an aversion to landedness, candour, assimilation and alphabet".

The voluminous notes by specialist scholars help to make this look like the definitive source-work on the subject; but I was surprised, as a non-specialist, by one or two failures of attribution. A version of the tale of a cuckolded cowherd, told by Stokes, can be found in Bocaccio's *Decameron*; and a long episode in the story of "The White Gallows", told by Cassidy, appears almost verbatim in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Tinder Box".

The glossary is useful at times, although I suspect that many of its definitions (for example, of pub, banknote, boss, smart, hell for leather, are) will seem superfluous even to the most American of American readers.

## Craft couple in Cornwall

A race run by the wind for a smock, all night. I see  
You hanging out your dresses by the light of the moon.  
Your husband has a beard like a bass brown humming  
All over his cheeks. He crosses himself at a tiny vitrine  
With the figure of the Pietà in frosted glass, tit,  
Brow, tit, left shoulder, right shoulder, left tit,  
Brow, which is a star and not a cross, when he sees her  
Hanging out her racing dresses in the breezes  
Of moonlight. He makes a brooch: a vampire bat  
Hugging a black obsidian to its pointed chest.

And this is the outcome of the struggle  
Of the Church against the cult of water and the night sky:  
Shaping a wet star in touch upon his torso. Stones  
He snaps into their inner firmament, and plants  
The flints round the garden in a star, where the dresses blow  
And the flowers blow too, implicating all who come  
In their perfume. I often see them  
On his motorbike, iron maiden roaring between his knees,  
The roaring girl, his Black Goddess from Japan  
Transporting her suppliants; on weekends in the town  
They lose themselves in an arcade with 200 pinball  
Machines. He often worships in the garden  
At the vitrine set into its flint wall.  
These flints open too into their daylight blue,  
Open like the flowers showing an inner sky  
Which is perfumed, as her dresses are  
From her inner sky, excited by their ride;  
She pins them to the line without their aid.

She makes sinister pin-money as beautician  
To the undertaker, and he remarks how shampoo  
Never takes right on a corpse's hair  
Unless her white hands zest the foam; and how  
The dead draw down the flies, as if on strings.  
Unless she washes them, and stars himself  
At their privilege and funeral radiance.  
Once they found an empty coffin beached  
Like a rowboat on the mudbanks, and re-used it.  
For love-letters and stock; it brimmed with brooches  
He hit on a new design; a Medusa brooch  
With white hands on wriggling arms instead of snakes.

PETER REIDGROVES

# A mater's mak'-ye' ups

Anne Smith

EWAN MACCOLL and PEGGY SEEGER  
Till Domsday in the Afternoon  
325pp. Manchester University Press. £25.  
07190 18137

The Stewarts of Blairgowrie have become well known in folk song and folklore circles as transmitters of traditional Scottish ballads and songs. Bella Stewart, the mater familiae, presides over an extended family of twenty-five - has added notably to the canon with songs of her own composition. The Stewarts belong to that group of compulsive travellers who used to be called, indiscriminately and pejoratively, "tinkers" or "gypsies".

Originally Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger planned only to compile a collection of songs and ballads from the Travellers' repertoire, but as they transcribed the recordings of their sessions with the Stewarts, they began to envisage a different kind of book altogether, one which would present an accurate picture of a traditional culture operating within the confined space of a family circle. What they did not show is the context of that culture. The practicalities of the Travellers' way of life apart, much of it is indistinguishable from that of the ordinary working-class Lowland Scot who for most of the period covered was only marginally less poor than the Travellers themselves. The Travellers are distinguished from the Lowland Scot, though, by their use of a jargon which Bella Stewart describes as "something that was added to the English". It takes the syntax and grammar of English but is based on words of diverse origin, "archaic Gaelic words and phrases, debased Latin and French words, words borrowed from Romani, Arabic and half-a-dozen other languages and dialects", as well as "hundreds of words borrowed from the artificially created 'Gaelic'".

When the authors showed the Stewart Dekkar's *Gala Homebooks* (1609), "they experienced little difficulty in... understanding the canting songs printed therein". A conversation among the Stewarts is translated to demonstrate: "Ay, they gib at the darkest but they dinnae mang that the vavver dement" - "Yes, they say that tonight, but they didn't say that the other night." Cant apart, the Stewarts speak the dialect of the eastern Lowland Scot. Similarly, their family structure and intense loyalties are virtually an exact reflection of those of the ordinary Scot from the same area. MacColl and Seeger seem not to realize this - or perhaps they have not appreciated the need for cross-reference to a background which would have valuable for the Stewarts in context.

*Till Domsday* is, with these reservations, a fascinating book. The Stewarts had wonderfully varied working lives: "He was piper to Lord Dudley of Dunkeld. He'd go down in the morning and play round the big house and be in the back at night playin' round the dinner-table between he'd be up and down the pie making dishes." There are passing references to having "I've seen my brother Donald get my granny that drunk that she couldnae licht her pipe". "Even the bairns smoked pipes long ago." The introductory section contains all this anecdotal material, illustrative of the Travellers' way of life. The bulk of the book is divided into sections on the cant (with a glossary); folk songs which are quite disappointingly derivative and poorly structured; fiddles; children's songs and catches, many of which were collected among Lowland Scots children; songs, many of which are variants on ballads collected in the Gospels of Europe, and the European Convention of Human Rights.

*Yearbook of European Law*  
Volume 4, 1984  
Edited by F. G. Jacobs  
As well as the major articles and some shorter ones, a number of general surveys of European organizations, the Yearbook publishes a series of annual surveys on areas of particular interest, including the European Community's relations with the EEC competition law, legal developments in the Council of Europe, and the European Convention of Human Rights.  
0 19 22521 7, £25.00

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*The Lawful Rights of Mankind*  
An introduction to the International Legal Code of Human Rights  
Paul Maghary  
An authoritative clear and concise introduction to the Lawful Rights of Mankind. The author, a leading expert on human rights, presents a series of annual surveys on areas of particular interest, including the European Community's relations with the EEC competition law, legal developments in the Council of Europe, and the European Convention of Human Rights.  
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0 19 22521 7, £25.00

*Celtic Folk Tales from America*  
Llanerch Enterprises; Llanerch, Porthcawl, Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales SA48 8JL  
A selection of largely pre-Christian stories from America. British most of which were first published by the French collector of tales P. M. Luzet in *Contes populaires de Haute Bretagne* (1879). This edition divides the tales according to representative themes and provides a new translation, introduction and commentary by Derek Bryce.

TL5 May 30 1986 POETRY

# The recent generations at their song

Michael Hofmann

MALCOLM JOHNSTON  
Irish Poetry After Joyce  
33pp. Mountrath, Portlaoise: Dolmen Press.  
£10.95 (paperback, £5.95).

PAUL MULDOON (Editor)  
The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry  
33pp. Faber. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95).

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The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry  
33pp. Faber. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95).

poetry in the United States, has organized his discussion around four pairs of poets - Austin Clarke and Thomas Kinsella, Patrick Kavanagh and Seamus Heaney, Denis Devlin and John Montague, and Louis MacNeice and Derek Mahon - but because his argument really demands it, but as an anti-Yeastian device, to protect his subjects from that intimidating paradigm of "the Irish poet". In his final chapter, he also devotes a lesser amount of space to Michael Longley, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon and others. Paul Muldoon's anthology, which covers fifty years and three or four poetic generations, nevertheless includes only ten poets: Kavanagh, MacNeice, Kinsella, Montague, Heaney, Longley, Mahon, Paul Durcan, Tom Paulin and McGuckian. The discrepancies between the two lists are worth attending to. Johnston's index, which admittedly is faulty, mentions neither Durcan nor Paulin. But while Durcan is genuinely absent from the book, Paulin's name is mentioned once or twice, though his poetry is not discussed. I can only assume this is on grounds of nationality, which is strange, for elsewhere Johnston can be quite dismissive about "testing for Irishness", notably in the case of MacNeice and the slights he suffered from critics and anthologists for "seemingly only sporadically Irish", whatever that means: it sounds like quite an Irish condition.

As for Muldoon's omissions of Austin Clarke and Denis Devlin, they should be seen in the context of his small overall selection: how many others are also absent from *The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry*? John Hewitt, Richard Murphy, James Simmonds... They reflect Muldoon's preferences as editor, and are his responsibility. There are other, more popular anthologies on the market. Muldoon has made his like an aggregate of "Selected Poems", with each poet, on average, enjoying the freedom of forty pages. Muldoon's exclusion of himself from his anthology, however - if understandable on grounds of editorial hygiene - is a great pity.

and severely weakens the latter, truly contemporary part of the book. As the youngest contributor, Muldoon would have finished it off in style. As it is, he has taken himself out almost entirely: no poems, no introduction, not even a "Nota". Ah, but there is something, a mischievously ventriloquial selection, of the tiny poem "Widgeon", poetically dictated by him to Seamus Heaney, and politely dedicated back to him. And there is an "Epilogue", in the form of a radio discussion from the year 1939, between Louis MacNeice and F. R. Higgins, representing, roughly, the Westerner and the Slavophile respectively in the Irish literary argument. F. R. Higgins also crops up in Johnston's book; the crusty Patrick Kavanagh blames him for "the absurdity and the lie called 'the Irish Literary movement'", which, insult to injury, he goes on to call "a thorough-going English-bred lie". This is what Higgins has to say here:

Present-day Irish poets are believers - heretical believers, maybe - but they have the spiritual buoyancy of a belief in something. The sort of belief I see in Ireland is a belief emanating from life, from nature, from revealed religion, and from the nation. A sort of dream that produces a sense of magic.

By inference anyway, Muldoon must see this line - the Celtic Noon - as the most awful prescriptive rot, for he leaves the last word to MacNeice, who discusses poetry in terms of great latitude and availability, and refuses to be drawn "into an Ireland versus England match". A poet, he says, "is a sensitive instrument designed to record anything which interests his mind or affects his emotions". And finally, Muldoon's anthology will not allow itself to be defined any more narrowly than that.

I suspect that, for many readers, its greatest gift will be a belated acquaintance with the generation between Yeats and Heaney, principally with Kavanagh and (for once, firmly in this context) MacNeice. John Montague, in the introduction to his *Faber Book of Irish Verse* (reviewed in the *TL5* of July 19, 1974), de-

scribed MacNeice as "very much a father figure for the poets of the province". Dillon Johnston quotes Derek Mahon's remark that MacNeice's example provided "a frame of reference for a number of younger poets in much the same way as Kavanagh's was in the South". Muldoon's anthology sets them both up in just this way, symmetrical and different. Reading through the full selections of their work, one is struck by the magnificent asperity of Kavanagh, the wit and poise of MacNeice. Both are full of lines and passages that seem to offer themselves as epigraphs for the book, as texts for its subsequent meditations, with their thoughts on the matter of Ireland - or the matter with Ireland - and the role of the poet - or the absence of such a role. The very first poem, Kavanagh's "Iniskeen Road: July Evening", establishes the poet as a poor solitary, an Alexander Selkirk all alone in possession of his landscape, with all his fellow-mortals gone off to a barn-dance: "A road, a mile of kingdom, I am king / Of banks and stones and every blooming thing". One might set beside this MacNeice's "Epitaph for Liberal Poets" or the "Elegy for Minor Poets".

Muldoon has included the whole of "The Great Hunger", Kavanagh's long poem about Irish rural life as experienced by the poor farmer Patrick Maguire, a kind of terminal anti-hero. It is a splendidly unsparring attack on the Zolaesque trinity of mother, soil and pub; on a life that, it seems, cannot bring anything but unfulfillment; on the ersatz gratifications of bushandry, pub philosophy, and, as here, card-playing:

Eleven o'clock and still the game  
Goes on and the players seem to be  
Drunk in so Orient opium den.  
Midnight, one o'clock, two.  
Somebody's leg has fallen asleep.  
What about home?

The short lines are wonderfully accommodated to the direct speech and changing perspectives of naturalism: they show dullness to terrible advantage. Kavanagh also does a good line

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in a more literary kind of abuse, describing Maguire's mother, "She had a venomous drawl, / And a wizened face like moth-eaten leatherette", and his sister, "His sister tightens her legs and her hips and frizzles up / Like the wick of an oil-less lamp". This grimly enjoyable anti-pastoral is followed by more lenient, beautiful lines like "We played with the frilly edges of reality / While we puffed our cigarettes".

Even without "Bagpipe Music" (sadly not included), the MacNeice section can look punky and panoptical, written with an audible sneer, with its assonances and internal rhymes. Does there exist in the language another group of five words as derisive as "Park your car in Killarney"? The whole of "Valediction" is a *tour de force*, its open and importunate sentence-structure served by vicious observations, spilling on assonantly. It is in "Sunday Morning" ("Man's heart expands to tinker with his car") that one finds an anticipation of Derek Mahon's "Glengormley"; in "Autumn Journal", the suburban Paulin ("And each rich family boasts a sagging tennis-net / On a spongy lawn beside a dripping shrubbery"); while "Train to Dublin" contains that strangely potent construction that Paul Muldoon has made his own: "I can no more gather my mind up in my fist / Than the shadow of the smoke of this train upon the grass."

It may be partly a quirk of the selection, but, by dint of poems of hatred and frustration like "The Great Hunger" and poems of elegant doubt like "Eclogue Between the Motherless", one has to go halfway through the book before finding a love poem of any description: then, admittedly, there are those of Montague, Longley and Heaney. Hereabouts Muldoon's selection gravitates quite sharply towards the earlier work of the poets he includes: only Tom Paulin, with ten poems from his latest book *Liberty Tree*, is an exception. There is only one poem from Montague's last book; one recent poem of Longley's; nothing from Durcan's last three books. The selection couldn't really be called off-beat or up-to-the-minute. Montague seems to me to be almost better served by his own choice of four poems in his *Faber Book of Irish Verse* than by the twenty-four here. None of Heaney's place-name poems is included, and the wider, angrier side of Mahon ("Ecclesiastes") is absent (I miss also his wonderfully exuberant, word-spinning "Joycentenary Ode"). Tom Paulin's schoolroom fantasy about the portmanteau post-politician Rupert Brookeborough, "A Written Answer", is included. There is the same poet's "breezy Union Jack" (from "Manichean Geography"), but not the "bunched detective"; the "muddled village" or the "boreal teacher" from "Atlantic Changelings"; "Traces" and "As a White Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers".

Given such large choices, though, and the far larger pool from which they were made, such specialized discontents as these are inevitable. Certainly, the number of first-rate poems in *The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry* is far bigger than the "half-a-dozen in fifty" that the generous MacNeice and the parsimonious Higgins were able to identify in English anthologies of 1939 and 1938 and 1937. But there is more to attend to than that: there is the way horizons have broadened over the years, even geographically: from the wretched early references to "Balling Broadway, London Town" or "Handclasp at Buxton" or "that last Christmas in Brooklyn", to Seamus Heaney's "Night Drive" South to France and Italy, to Derek Mahon's archaeological sifting through a whole world of history and decay ("We might be anywhere - in the Dordogne; / Iquitos, Bethlehem") and to Tom Paulin's investigation of political parallels binding the world just as surely and invisibly as lines of latitude.

Most of the poets here have managed to marry the strengths of the two traditions that Muldoon has set at the head of his anthology: taking the difficult affections of Kavanagh and the verbal awareness of MacNeice to bind words and feelings in new ways. As has, of course, Muldoon himself; he is the most characteristic poet now writing in Britain and Ireland. His trail-seeming pamphlet, *The Wishbone*, contains a dozen tense, recalcitrant and fascinating poems written since the publication of *Quoy* (1983). The governing notion behind the volume seems to be that of the trophy, the proof of the nuptial: the readiness to

They reversed away from the window.  
To the right hung  
one ox-tail,  
to the left one ox-tongue.

Hia favoured sonnet-form, first explored in *Mules*, is now presented in jointed pieces, garnished with asterisks. The title-poem is about eating a Christmas dinner with his father. There is no point in quoting it in anything less than its entirety:

Maureen in England, Joseph in Guelph,  
my mother in her grave.

At three o'clock in the afternoon  
we watch the Queen's  
message to the Commonwealth  
with the sound turned off.

He seems to favour Camelot  
over To Have And Have Not.

Yet we agree, my father and myself,  
that here is more than enough  
for two; a frozen chicken,  
spuds, sprouts, Paxo sage and onion.

The wishbone like a rowelled spur  
on the fibula of Sir - or Sir -

One notes immediately how engaging and open this is, both informative and economical. It is perhaps the syntax, more than anything, that marks out a Muldoon poem: the very deliberate, wilful alternating between curt observations without verbs, and almost sumptuously correct and full sentences, savouring mood and tense, sorry almost that they are not to be translated into Greek or Latin. Accompanying this variation is Muldoon's mesmeric use of idiom: that "no more... than" or "no less... than" that occurs in MacNeice, the "might just as well" - all the expressions of wishing and offering that recur in his poetry, contributing both specificity and uncertainty. Taking into account also the sometimes-less-than-half-rhymes, his poems are weightless as things in space; the short, rather sardonic narrative of "The Wishbone" is far less important than the play of suggestion and implication, where there is no set order, and anything can be contemporary with anything else. Thus, the title *To Have And Have Not* really spreads over the whole poem; England, Guelph, the Commonwealth, Camelot all coalesce in one quarrelsome and disaffected whole, and the simile for the wishbone at the end suggests some Dantesque atrocity. For all its breezy innocence, "The Wishbone" can be set alongside the exhumations of Seamus Heaney's *Narrative* or the archaeological researches of Derek Mahon. And the whole pamphlet, well, that should be nipped or glued or spliced to Muldoon's anthology, an impromptu supplement, while one waits for his next book, and his *Selected Poems*, both promised within the next year.

Some of the poets who are represented in Muldoon's Faber anthology have recently published new volumes. I found Thomas Kinsella's work rather watery in Muldoon's selection of it; both literally and figuratively: "Downstream", "Touching the River", "Tao and Unfitness at Initiation on the River Nore". Human and natural epiphanies are lovingly evoked, but the connections between them are often not made available in the irregular stream of his poetry. And yet, he is also capable of the utmost hardness and condensation, as in these lines from his elegy on the composer Seán O Riada, in *Fifteen Dead* (1979):

Pierrot limping forward in the sun  
out of Merrion Square, long ago,  
in black overcoat and boots,  
pale as death from his soiled bed,

swallowed back; autumn  
brewed in clay; uttered  
in brief meat and bones, flattened  
back under our flower.

His two latest books from his own Peppercorn Press have the same variable beauty as the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. The shorter poem in *Songs of the Psyche*, memories of fifty years ago and more, are admirable in their certainty and definition.

Ruskin and Engels and Carlyle:  
Shakespeare to my prize,  
1927 in dead period;  
the insurance collection book  
in a fat estate fund.

with four young men  
dressed up together  
and leaning together in laughter.

Her Vertical Smile, a poem about Mahler, sex and the First World War, contains some magnificent writing, especially about music:

A step forward and a lesser  
step back, the baton withdrawn.  
A timed exhalation.

Dolce... He reaches  
for something sonthing.  
His shoulders sag for a bar of silence.

Kinsella strikes me as deliberately unorganized, a poet of indeterminate drift and sublime passages.

Derek Mahon's *Antarctica*, his latest "interim collection" (how he must enjoy the uncertainty of that expression), contains fourteen poems: it is a sombre, impressive and moving book, concerned with the subject of farewells. The first poem, "A Kensington Notebook", even though it predates Mahon's recent departure for Dublin, still lends itself to being read as his goodbye to London; it is a slightly over-stuffed, allusive poem about previous residents of that *quartier*, Ford, Pound and Lewis, that broadens out into a reflection on the role of the artist. The title-poem is a villanelle, whose two recurring lines are "At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime" (not a bad motto for Mahon's art) and the famous last words of Captain Oates, "I am just going outside and may be some time". Neither poem-description quite manages to suggest the raptness and bleakness of *Antarctica* as a whole, qualities that make it - even for Mahon - quite a departure; their wit and erudition, their shapeliness and tripping music almost seem to be at odds with what is being expressed in the rest of the book, which is a grave, valedictory vision of the world.

It is suggested in an interview Mahon gave in a recent *Poetry Ireland Review* (reassuringly jaunty, by the way), that it is Beckett who has moved to the centre of his *Weltschmerz*; and it is Beckett who supplies one of the epigraphs for what is possibly the best poem in the book, "Tithonus", the other being "and after the fire a still small voice" from the Book of Kings. The few casual rhymes in this poem, the little plays on "lights" and "croak", the production of culture and nature where both have become obsolete, are the traces of an art that has outlived itself, of an intelligence

"nodding in the everbreeze" - to borrow from another poem - after some catastrophe. The winter at the end of "Tithonus", the wind at the beginning, the fire and the deserts of the epigraphs, indeed, all the weather and elements in the book, are of nuclear origin. These are tender, almost unbearably significant poems.

Paul Durcan has found many advocates (not the least of them Paul Muldoon) for his bare, rambling friendly, open, tactics, glibness, irreverent, *épater les Irlandais* poems. But even Edna Longley, editor and introducer of his now slightly expanded, reissued *Selected Poems*, while admiring his moral fibre (he has developed the conscience of his race, she says), notes that his poems are sometimes short of literary quality. They sag and sag and sag to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to go on reading them. The parody news-items, the anti-ecclesiastical outrages, the naive love-poems, all get plenty of airing. But *The Belfast Review* is right when it observes that "he resuscitates one's flagging belief in 'the poet-as-the-world'", where Patrick Kavanagh found himself out on the road, all alone, Paul Durcan would surely have been at the Durcan with everyone else. In his poems he is often to be found in pubs and cafés and trains, talking to people. He comes across as a good, brave and independent man, capable of saying what it takes some courage to say, big things and little.

His whole-hearted championing of women ("Fat Molly", "Teresa's Bar") finds its counterpart in some rather deprecating self-images, and allied to these is a series of distinctly unflattering male portraits, latter-day Blooms like "The Kilfenora Teaboy" and "The County Engineer".

But he bed at night with his wife  
She whispers to him  
'Oh my little engineer.'

The habit of self-ridicule, and his consistently pro-feminine outlook, make for considerable poignancy in the poems in his latest book, *The Berlin Wall Café*, about the end of his marriage. He is left as the fervent priest, even the prophet, of a religion that has brought him great suffering:

Calmly I pledged my prayer and affection,  
Promising her never again to seek her out,  
Never again in this city to darken her doorway,  
To woo her only and always in the eternity of my  
lost child.

Let us now praise famous women - and their children.

## Overwhelming questions

Simon Rae

ELIZABETH JENNINGS  
*Extending the Territory*  
91pp. Carcanet. £4.95.  
085635 558 5

It may be doubted whether Elizabeth Jennings ever felt entirely at home in the ranks of the Movement. "Answers", the last poem in her first full collection, *A Way of Looking* (1955), shows her outwardly conforming to, while at the same time chafing against, the constraints of the Movement ideology: "I kept my answers small and kept them near; / Big questions bruised my mind but still I let / Small answers be a bulwark to my fear." With its simple colloquial diction ordered into a tight formal structure, the poem is a pleasing example of Movement poetics. But there is an obvious dissatisfaction with the proscription of the "meta-physical"; the poem voices a hankering for the "overthrow" of the small answers, and in its last line envisages "all the great conclusions coming near".

From the 1960s, Miss Jennings went her own way, with confessional poems about mental breakdown, and a strong line in candid religious verse in which the vulnerability of belief is exposed and explored. Both formally and thematically she has moved outwards from her 1950s base, and as the title of her latest collection indicates, she continues to do so. Far from being satisfied, or half-satisfied, with small answers, her poetry now plays host to some big questions: "Why / Are we set here, / the tower of our reflections, / Living in fear / of the 'degenerate' not to die?" "Is this globe a

homa? / Is it at the mercy of our will?" "Does time forgive?" Even in the realm of personal relations, the questions continue relentlessly: "What then will our future be?" "Can trust / Ever be retrieved?" "Are you really lost to me?" While it is to Jennings's credit that she admits to the uncertainties that bedevil us all around, as a rhetorical device the constant asking of questions soon palls. It is not so much that the questions remain unanswered, but that, while pointing to states of mental and emotional conflict or confusion, they induce so little dramatic force into the poetry. In the end, they baffle as much - or as little - power as an unrelieved stream of bland assertions or statements.

One of the directions in which Jennings's territory has been extended is back into childhood. While some poems manage to convey convincingly the emotional reality of childhood, "The Child's Story" captures the love and attraction "love" may hold for children too many suffer from precociousness (Memory is the key / And caress too) or poetic talent: "My spirit was fiery and preened / The sun / And O at rare times I saw / It capering".

Miss Jennings can still, though, produce evidence of a strong and enduring talent, as in the perfectly paced opening of "Certain Landscapes" including the lines, "You have brought my kindest ideas down / And shown me where the better truths go" which effectively link her to the tradition of English lyric poetry.

PORTSMOUTH: 1986 18p. ARNOLD 28p.

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## Floating lyrically

Adam Mars-Jones

MARK STRAND  
*Mr and Mrs Baby and Other Stories*  
127pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.95.  
0701 3022 9

Mark Strand is a poet as well as a writer of stories, and in his fiction he continues to observe a poet's priorities. The substitution of the poetic for the prosaic is actually the mechanism of one of the most genial pieces here, "The President's Resignation": the President in question treats the life of his country not as a narrative, the telling of which is briefly entrusted to him, but as a pretext for lyric. "The bluesy", he says in his farewell address, "in variations and repetitions, is what I look back on: the blues of my first day in office, the blues of my fifth day, the porcelain blues, the monotonous blues, the stately blues, the ideal blues and the slightly less than ideal blues, the yellow blues on certain winter days..."

A successful device in one story looks a little different when it seems to haunt all the others. Strand's problem is one of short-windedness; the brevity of his stories is not an effect of compression. He seems to find something almost embarrassing about the merely incremental progress of narrative, and recurs as soon as he can to the transcendent evasiveness of lyric. As the resigning President puts it: "Who can forget my proposals...? How like poetry, said my enemies. They were right. For it was my wish to make nothing happen." But what amounts to a proud boast for poetry can be an admission of failure in a writer of fiction.

Strand can start a story with real brio: "Even before the baby was born, its mother hired a sister to prepare for the days when she'd need one. She told the sister, 'The baby's in the living room, but it's real small. If you don't see it, don't worry.' Then the mother pretended to leave, and hid in the bushes outside the living-room window, watching the sister's every move." Having devised this promising situation, Strand retreats from it, producing instead the sort of surrealism which palls because it sets up no vibrations in the ordinary.

In "Dog Life", a husband tells his wife about his past as a dog. The daffy epiphanies and whims he describes are the story's reason for existing; and in a prose-poem they would be

enough: "I was embarrassed by the pomp of hitches in heat - their preening and wagging, by the panting lust of my brothers." By the time the husband has finished his story, his wife is asleep; her function as a trigger of lyric is over, and she has none of the troubling solidity, the surplus reality, of a character in a real story.

It seems no accident that Strand describes encounters rather than relationships. Again, one story puts this trait to work by recounting the hero's six momentary "true loves", his five marriages being mentioned only in passing. Strand's is a sensibility that everywhere privileges the glimpse over the gaze.

The closest approach in the book to the creation of a real space for the reader is in stories where the lyric voice is at least put at a distance. In "Wooley", for instance, the narrator reviews the history he has shared with a friend, charismatic, inspirational and now dead:

When I asked him how he felt after his father out him off without a penny, he said, 'I would go out under the stars and enter the smallness of being that was mine, and I would disappear into the emptiness within, and it seemed enormous.' Again there was no anger.

Once, while we were swimming, I asked him if things came easily to him. He said, 'I see the world through a small eye, an eye so small the world does not notice.' I was so moved by this answer I almost drowned.

This last sentence briefly suggests a comic chasm between the world as it is and the way that lyric represents it, between words that float and people who are liable to drown. But there are no values other than lyrical ones on offer, and the chasm can only close up again.

The title character in the story "The Killer Poet" kills his parents and his dog, then goes to the garden to contemplate the poem he will write to commemorate his mother's beauty. "An air of fertility formed an invisible crown of fullness everywhere, which was why, I suppose, I conceived a poem not about what I intended but about tomatoes, fennel, squash, and the buried inverted obelisks of carrots and parsnips." That's the thing about lyricism: it is discontinuous, only fleetingly connected to a world of necessary consequence, and it can transform absolutely anything. Lyrical brilliance is not necessarily a virtue in a writer of prose, and as a producer of fiction Mark Strand is clearly, to use a poetic word with a humdrum meaning, moonlighting. He backs down from narrative, and takes the earliest opportunity to disrupt it with rapture.

## The poor as no one would want them to be

John Gledson

CLARICE LISPECTOR  
*The Hour of the Star*  
90pp. 085635 626 3  
*The Foreign Legion: Stories and chronicles*  
200pp. 085635 627 1.  
Translated with an afterword by Giovanni Pontiero.  
Manchester: Carcanet. £8.95 each.

In the past year or so, four translations of works by the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector have appeared in this country: *Family Ties* and *The Apple in the Dark* were reviewed in these pages on January 25 last year. But it is hard to imagine anyone who enjoyed the stories in the first of these, in particular, not getting extra pleasure from this daring, intense and yet final. Not quirky writer. We can be grateful to Giovanni Pontiero for his belief in her, and for the quality of his translations.

*The Hour of the Star* is her last book, published posthumously in 1977, the year she died (aged 56) of cancer in Rio. In the circumstances it would have been hard to call it anything but a masterpiece, "consecrated" writer as she was in Brazil. Yet, out of real necessity, because the thought of writing as a useless occupation unless it brought home something of the possible meanings and meaningfulness of ordinary lives, she had to reject any form of consecration; here, in a novel of less than 100 pages, she again succeeds in upsetting expectations. She tells the story of Macabéa, a woman from the poor North-Eastern region of Brazil, who is 27 years old. Lispector can make her contemporary. Even her skin-colour is uncer-

tain. She is poor, earning less than the statutory minimum salary, but she is a typist, who listens to "Radio Cultura", picking up useless pieces of information entirely devoid of context. "A man, who was also a mathematician, wrote *Alice in Wonderland*", which she then "discusses" with her repellently macho and self-confident boyfriend, Olímpico. In conversations which go beyond banality to reveal unplumbed depths of intellectual and emotional deprivation. Not for nothing is "the most popular soft drink in the world" her favourite: yet even here, when we seem to be falling into stereotype, Lispector paradoxically admits that its attraction is real. As well as "sponsoring the recent earthquake in Guatemala", "this thing which contains cock is today: It allows people to be modern and to move with the times." This might seem to be said tongue in cheek: in fact, it is entirely likely that it is not. It is a measure of the book's success that it manages to make someone unlovable nevertheless such an uncomfortable presence. Even her death under the wheels of a Mercedes just after Madama Carloti, a grotesque ex-prostitute clairvoyante, has forecast love and success for her, sits firmly astride mockery and tragedy, a challenge to reader and narrator alike.

Poverty is a difficult subject for anyone, but it is only too comprehensible if for a Latin American it is even more so. Who could deny its crushing importance and visibility in the continent? Nevertheless, it is easy to feel that, like the Guatemalan earthquake, it has been "sponsored" for consumption at home and abroad. Desensitizing is part of Clarice's solution: Macabéa, I suspect, is the poor as no one would want them to be, whatever their political views. This is the measure, not only of

## Raging poetically

John Butt

REINALDO ARENAS  
*Farewell to the Sea*  
Translated by Andrew Hurley  
413pp. Viking. £12.95.  
0670 52960 5

*Farewell to the Sea* was much persecuted by the Cuban Communist authorities: the first manuscript "disappeared" in 1969, the second was confiscated in 1971, the third was smuggled out of Havana in 1974 and published in Barcelona in 1982. The publishers highlight these deplorable facts, which are a burden on the reviewer's conscience, because for all its painful history, the novel is just about unreadable. In fact, one marvels at the paranoia of a régime which could imagine itself threatened by a book which so crudely disqualifies its own message of protest by making it look like the side-product of private emotional, marital and sexual hang-ups.

Post-Marxist depression is a malady so widespread and predictable, and of such rapid onset, that revolutionary régimes would do well to take prophylactic measures against it - for example, by moderating their promises. Marxists no doubt ask for the sort of trouble exemplified by this novel when they claim, or at least refuse explicitly to deny, that the revolution will not only bring political and economic remedies but personal happiness as well. The protagonists suffer from problems that Marxism-Leninism can hardly address: their marriage is in crisis because the wife looks on her husband as a tyrant and her husband has discovered he is a homosexual. And it is against the background of this personal distress that the book rages against Castro's Cuba in the form of two separate, largely divergent, shrill and hallucinatory streams of consciousness, mostly written in poetic prose and a third in more or less surrealistic verse, sometimes printed vertically or diagonally.

That these characters want far more than they could reasonably expect from half a decade of state planning and collectivized sugar production is revealed in such thoughts of the wife as "Now that the - shall we say - fundamental problems are solved - house, food, car, salary - we can devote our full efforts to making life intolerable. We could wipe each other out once and for all with an honest look." Her problem is at least identifiable, and one of

the novel's achievements is the remarkably detailed and convincing portrait it gives of a depressed young mother in a dead-end marriage. Moreover, she spots the nature of their politics when she admits that "we denounce the implacable censorship so as not to speak of our own alliances".

The husband's problems are two-fold: he is a married homosexual and he lives in a Victorian society. But this dilemma is used to fuel a hatred of communism which knows no reasonable bounds: It is a perverted religion which "offers man nothing but Hell", but it appeals to the innumerable "small-time hoodlums and the frustrated of the world", so he is surprised (such is his opinion of men) that it hasn't spread further in "this era of great changes, poisons and self-flagellations", polluted by the schemes of "hearsed leftist whoremongers encoined in Paris inventing or backing nonexistent revolutions (which are no more than unanimous prisons for forced laborers)", etc.

That Cuba is in the hands of hearsed leftist whoremongers is about as much as the novel tells us about the decade following the fall of Batista. Its artistic strength must no doubt be sought in its poetic charge. One of its themes is that natural beauty is a permanent defence against the ridiculous pretensions of the human intellect, but it is difficult to judge how well Arenas captures such beauty in his own lyrical passages. For a start, the book is obviously all but untranslatable, and Andrew Hurley can't be blamed for whole pages of such stuff as "the finest fuckup of them all / the great floating fibrous where / a phonograph forever flutes / its philanthropic fluff and / an unphotogenic, / fetid, / syphilitic, / aphonic mephitic / proffers us / ... its fur / ous phys / log / n / omny" (Fidel Castro, we presume).

There are passages of beauty, for example where the narrators contemplate the sea at dusk (a symbol of a purity untouched by left-wing politics), but these moments of tranquil contemplation are soon dinned out by feeble abuse aimed at everything in modern Cuba, not just the political prisons, thought control and execution of teenagers, but everything the régime ever did, thought or organized, including calls for improved coffee production and more careful grain harvesting; even, in fact, the shape of Castro's face. Had this book been written against Videla, Mao, Stalin or Hitler, it would still invite the suspicion that its author was deliberately looking for martyrdom in the name of art.

an honourable (and anything but "magical") realism, but of the need for what at first reading is the most startling feature of the book; its very assertive and even unattractive male narrator, Rodrigo S. M. His maleness, as often with Clarice, is an index of coldness and calculation; here, it is something she needs to provide a barrier between her and her subject, yet is none the less more than that, for his intelligence and his battles with what he cannot help but narrate are part of the story's fascination.

The stories of *The Foreign Legion*, first published in 1964, are closer to the concerns of *Family Ties*, generally centred on the Rio middle class, and on emotional crises, especially

those of adolescence. These are not books for children, however: rather, they remind us of the continuing presence within ourselves of the vulnerable, the awkward, the insensitive and callous beings that children often are - more openly than adults. At her best, which in her stories is frequent, Clarice combines intensity with precision. The thirteen stories are supplemented by more than a hundred "chronicles" - jottings, which vary in length from a few lines to a few pages, encouraged by the Brazilian press, which allows writers like Lispector or the poet Drummond de Andrade space to doodle in public. Naturally, it is impossible to read many of them at a sitting, but every reader will find something.

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# Unauthorized versions

## Peter Reading

BAMBER GASCOIGNE

Cod Streuth

181pp. Cape. £8.95.

0224023888

CHRIS WILSON

Gallimauf's Gospel

151pp. Brighton: Harvester. £7.95.

07106 10229

Both these novels feature an unfortunate traveler – a Calvinist and a monkey, respectively – cast among and destroyed by an alien society satirically reflecting our own.

With entertaining bibliophilic plausibility, Bamber Gascoigne unfolds his specious translation from the Portuguese of a nineteenth-century librarian at São João del Rei. The Portuguese is itself a translation from the sixteenth-century French of apostate monk Jacques le Balleur's account (discovered, written on tobacco leaves, in the library's broom cupboard) of his detention by a tribe of Brazilian highlanders.

These concupiscent Tupinilbas have mistaken le Balleur's ten pages of the third book of Rabelais (4 vols, Troyes edition, 1556), sole remnants of the work to survive the vagaries of jungle travel, for the Bible promised them by Jacques's missionary predecessor. Thus the Word is made Cod, without which was not anything made that was made, and they abide by it.

Jacques, acceding as king of the tribe, must coit with twenty wives – a monthly tally of his prowess is presented to the people in the form

of an appropriate number of fruits. Each new moon he must superscribe both sides of a single tobacco leaf before renewing his responsibilities. These leaves, "Monthly Reports", describe his experiences, from marked initiation as priapic monarch, when "most startling of all, a hand gently cupped me from below, as delicately as if judging the weight of a pair of new-laid eggs", to the eve of his execution for chastity, repentant at last (having heretofore disregarded as "de necessitate the sin of fornication, unavoidable for a man with nineteen wives above the Christian allowance").

The savages' simple customs and their adoption of the Rabelaisian Gospel enable Gascoigne to comment on imbecile tenets held by ostensibly more urbane beings. Magnificent sideswipes abound:

These [the tobacco leaves] are their most sacred treasures. By this you make plain to us, Lord, that these seeming savages are of a reformed disposition. They bring to holy writ, as we of Geneva do, the care and veneration which the corrupt minions of Rome lavish upon a lump of the clay left over after You had fashioned Adam, or a long red hair recalling the earthly charms of the Magdalen, or even, dread Lord, and I remember this with revulsion from my misguided youth, parings from Your own sacred fingernails and portions of Your blessed forestain, all other recoverable elements having ascended with You as the Scriptures prove.

In this barbaric place a parallel is drawn between seedy Communism and more recognizably oasty anthropophagy – "Flesh and blood at these savage festivities to the mouths of cannibals, and flesh and blood at the Mass". *A-propos de la guerre*, Jacques philosophizes: "In Christendom powerful lords march on their enemies, and brave men die, to decide the great principles by which we may live in peace and virtue, as for example whether there are two or seven sacraments and whether the wine shall be given along with the bread." But with the savages "this constant struggle is not, as

with us at home, about important matters".

The same Swiftian toot dismisses the foolish natives' disgusting creation myth (God ejaculating into a clay pot), and substitutes the boia fide version – the fashioning of Adam from clay and Eve from his rib ("godly in its grandeur and simplicity").

There is bawdry in this well-balanced book ("These details are Rabelaisian, but so is life"); there is tenderness – Jacques, writing of his dead, beloved, favourite wife "can never describe her. But by this devious route, bringing to mind your own happiness, past or present, perhaps may lead you into imagining the joyful presence and the grievous loss of one whose very name it seems a sacred and desperate act to write, large letter by letter"; there is unpresumptuous shrewdness in its apophthegms ("It may be observed that all man, scosing the approach of death, become reluctant to offend against any religious tenet or superstition", "Theology in this modern age is a violent matter", *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*).

Lucretian, Rabelaisian and Swiftian overtones are less felicitous in *Gallimauf's Gospel*. The joke about a monkey being washed ashore during the Napoleonic War, identified as a French spy and hung by the people of Hartlepool, is elaborated by Chris Wilson to parallel-length. The philosophical, theological, ethical and commercial values of a society are questioned as Maria, a simian survivor of a shipwreck, reaches the isle of Iffa and confronts the community.

The protagonists are caricatures – Hogg, the bloated, avaricious businessman; Parson Lovegrave, lascivious, hypocritical, evil; Lord Iffe, powerful, despotic; Gallimauf, the island's philosopher, a fool. This last recognizes Maria, by her curious language, as a Gallic Thinker, and an amusing exchange ensues:

"Huchahuchabucha... buch", declared Maria, pushing her rasping tongue into the scholar's ear whilst holding him locked in a fierce embrace.

"Huch, huch", conceded Gallimauf, squinting. "Mais il faut cultiver votre jardin."

There is a mad woman, Vera, in the mould of *Heart of Midlothian's* Madge Wildfire, persecuted to insanity by the populace (it emerges that they have killed her illegitimate child – "I nursed and loved it, Lordy... Then they took it away and kilt it"). Vera befriends the misfit monkey, and, predictably, here is the voice of sanity and humanity to a violently deranged tribe. At the bestial "OphalMesa", a ritual of piss and buggery, Vera chides the "Wicked peoples – naughty bodies" and protects the innocent beast from learning any more.

A hint of Flann O'Brien is claimed by the blurb and is perhaps detectable. People of foreign tongue are said to "twist the proper sounds of words so that they become like best spoons that cannot carry. The meanings slide off the edges, fall to the floor, and all is a dollop of nonsense". In a Carrollian trial "Both twins swore they were innocent, protesting they were the other. 'I am victimised by mistake appearance,' they spoke in unison. 'The naughty one is my brother...'. The manic energy and menace that O'Brien generates is lacking, though.

Nor, despite cod's livers stewed in goat stock and goat chops fried in cod's oil and members "wrinkled and limp as cod-liver sausage, or swollen and mad as rhubarb", does Wilson's short novel seriously recall Rabelais or Swift. But there is an original, memorably poignant last wall from poor, mad Vera on man's inhumanity to monkey, as she laments the executed fenned outsider:

Persons hate peoples. Smearem weakies, eaten nates, suckem marrow, scrunchem bones... Sulfem life so anuffit... seelt run, breakit legs. Hearit laught and aqushit. Watchit fly so cage it. Born it, so picklet it. Breathe it so chookit neck. Seet see so pokit eyes out.

# Publishing the faith

## Peter Hebblethwaite

WILFRID SHEED

Frank and Maisie: A memoir with parents

266pp. Chatto and Windus. £14.95.

0701130547

Only connoisseurs of Catholic trivia will know that the Catholic Evidence Guild, founded in 1910 by an inebriate New Zealander, was designed to convert England by soap-box oratory. If it did not achieve that goal, at least it brought together one of the most improbable and successful couples of the twentieth century. Frank Sheed, fresh from Sydney, had a lawyer's love of argument, and became a speaker for the Guild. At one of its periodic humble sales, he was addressed by an officious lady who asked: "Are these good scissors?" She would have had every right to call him "young man" since he was eight years her junior. "Madam", said Frank, looking at the merchandise for the very first time, "these are the very best scissors." That was how Frank Sheed met Maisie Ward, granddaughter of "Ideal" Ward, who preceded Newman into the Roman Catholic Church and who, notoriously, would have welcomed an infallible doctrine with *The Times* each morning. Her father, Wilfrid, edited the *Dublin Review*, fell under suspicion of "Modernism", as did almost everyone literate, and died a broken man. Wilfrid Sheed (his grandson) cruelly remarks in *Frank and Maisie: A memoir with parents* that "the *Dublin Review* seems to have been at the exact center of the tawpoo in which the storm raged".

What Frank and Maisie had in common was an intense conviction that the Catholic Church was right on just about everything. They had hardly any "non-Catholic" friends, and this did not change much for the next fifty years. Yet the publishing house they founded, Sheed and

Ward, was not narrow in the 1930s, since it introduced English-speaking Catholics to Jacques Maritain, Karl Adam, Léon Bloy, Romano Guardini, Paul Claudel and many others. But home-grown, homespun G.K. Chesterton was the author's godfather, and Maisie toiled for eight years over her biography of the great man. His limitations were not unknown in the Sheed family. His godson remarks that G.K.'s reading invariably stopped when he had found his first good debating point. Even Maisie herself confessed in her *Edwardian* account: "I'm afraid G.K. was drinking rather heavily towards the end." As for Hilare Belloc, her son says that "though she admired his work, she was immune to his manner, and for years lived in dread of being asked to write his biography." She remained unasked. Wilfrid Sheed speculates that his mother's post-war book, *France Pagan?* was her revenge on Belloc's growlings about "Europe and the faith".

Of course oooh of this was admitted at Hyde Park Corner where Frank and Maisie mostly did their weekly tub-thumping. They were apologists to their fingertips. You want to talk about bad popes? Can name six who were far worse than the Borgias: but so what? You think the Church and science are opposed? Open your dictionary – there you will find amps, volts and pasteurization, all named after good Catholic scientists. At Guild training sessions Frank imperorated a rich variety of hecklers without whom no meeting could succeed.

Since Americans, on the whole, did not have a tradition of street-corner speaking, the United States translation of their skills was the lecture tour. This kept Sheed and Ward afloat financially and brought new readers in a country still dominated by "Slater says" and "Father says". That lay people had something to contribute intellectually was a novelty. Frank, who had picked up some theology from reading his

authors, wrote a best-selling book called *Theology and Sanity* which showed that Catholicism was common sense. It was used as the Sixth Form textbook at Downside when young Wilfrid was sent there, an unhappy exile from New York and baseball, in the late 1940s.

Frank Sheed began to feel more at home in America. Evelyn Waugh, choosing his words with down-pulling care, described him as "an energetic American publisher". After a long talk with Sir Arnold Lunn, mountaineer and fervent apologist, Frank confessed, "You see, perhaps I'm provincial after all." Lunn nodded and said, "Perhaps that's it." Maisie thought this a wildly funny story. But the image of the bouncy young fellow from the Australian outback clung to him so that Maisie "became ever more respected in the land she had spurned while Frank's myth had to settle for that colony-gone-wrong, America". He became, as his son says, "Mr Chips to the whole Catholic nation". But he would not send his son to any of the Catholic colleges he exploited and packed him off instead to Oxford.

Something happened to Frank in the autumn of 1956. He fainted and fell off the soap-box at Hyde Park Corner, smashing the crucifix on which he leaned. One legend said he was talking of the devil at the time. His son maintains that he was a changed man after this, becoming much angrier with the Catholic biblical scholars who were, he believed, tearing the heart out of the New Testament. Wilfrid Sheed calls these the "King Lear years". He had published these men, brought them on, and now they were destroying his life's work. "I've had a good week," he would say, "if haven't heard a single major doctrine denied from the pulpit."

Yet the last years were not just grumpy. The Second Vatican Council (1962-5) was a triumph for Sheed and Ward policies. Many of the authors he had been championing became its leading theologians. But at the same time the Council was a body-blow to the kind of triumphalism that the Catholic Evidence Guild

had once represented. "If you argue to win", Frank mused towards the end, "you're bound to end up cheating." He put his son-in-law, Neil Middleton, in charge of the London end of the firm, and saw it drift incomprehensibly leftwards. The marriages of both his children broke up, which pained him immeasurably. The Catholic literary establishment seemed to be heading "for the barren land of alimony and child support". Maisie took it rather better, "voting dejectedly for the happiness of her children", as the author puts it. "I still have enthusiasm", she said towards the end. But then her head plopped back: "But what use is enthusiasm without energy?" Maisie died in 1975 at eighty-six.

Frank was still bouncing along the road. He had friends everywhere, so he never needed to stay in hotels. He took up Greek in his late seventies, having discovered that Cato began learning it in his nineties. So for the first time in his life he took to "exploring and celebrating the Bible rather than defending it". This brought him closer to the charismatic movement. His last book, *The Instructed Heart*, was the fruit of his latest studies on the meaning of "heart" in the New Testament. It was also a love-letter to his bride of fifty years. Then, concludes Wilfrid Sheed, "after waiting around patiently, fruitfully, he goes with absolute certainty to join her".

Any "assessment" of Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward will have to take into account their literary and apologetic work. It is probably more important in the long run that she founded the Catholic Housing Aid Society in Britain (if you are going to have more babies, you must have somewhere to put them), and that they were allies of the saintly Dorothy Day and Friendship House in New York. Though they were in the word-business, they knew that for Christians deeds are more important than words. Part of their achievement is to have evoked this loving memoir from their talented but sceptical son.

## Belated awakenings

### Violet MacKay

CATHARINE ARNOLD

Lost Time

220pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.

0340387831

Catharine Arnold's novel about the belated sexual awakening of Cambridge don Miles Tattersall is loaded, overloaded, with the impediments of several sorts of sentimental and sensational novel-poltergeisty crashings of chime cabinets and the plangent tones of the cello which Miles's sister Francesca plays professionally; long meaningful conversations about Burrows's *Anatomy of Melancholy* in autumnal Cambridge pubs; dire warnings from psychic elderly composers; the suicide of a French novice and hints about something that happened long ago in an orchard; if not actually to a woodshed. This ought to guarantee a book which was not only bad but absurd, yet

somehow it does not; somehow this is a rather respectable first novel.

Part of the reason is that Arnold works so hard at it all; there is conviction to the way that practically every one of the major characters has some sort of memory attached to them of the awful demise of someone close. The sense of malign destiny zeroing in is achieved by the tawdriness of means – both pairs of siblings, Miles and Francesca, and the younger pair Beaumont and Olivia, with whom Miles becomes entangled, have fathers who died slightly mysteriously as the result of falls – but it is thoroughly established and a vivid part of the novel's atmosphere. Arnold has a tendency to characterize people by presenting us with a list of their possessions in general and their books and records in particular; the chatter of various sorts and conditions is rather mechanically, but accurately, recorded, and there is real if mild comedy in the way Miles finds the shop talk of Benjamin's advertising designer cousin Melis-

sa "utterly incomprehensible, 'as obscure as structuralism'".

There are rather too many references to parallel plots in books and films and rather too much arch prattle about books and paintings and music, but at least this is an author and a set of characters who have an intellectual life of overwhelming importance to them, however over-obtrusive it often becomes. One of the reasons why the erotic aspect of the novel works is the author's decision to make her virgin mala and make his original seduction homosexual: she has to work hard to imagine and communicate what the act feels like, and has also perhaps to restrict herself to the odd telling phrase, rather than going into endless photo-realistic detail. Reluctance is not the only way to achieve erotic effects but it is certainly one way, and one which, given Arnold's tendency to the catalogue, she was sensible to adopt in this sometimes clumsy but ultimately attractive novel.

## It never is

LEN DEIGHTON

London Match

405pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.

0 09 61899 8

Len Deighton's latest book completes the trilogy begun with *Berlin Game* and continued with *Mexico 36*. Bernard Samson solves the problems which have been nagging at him for a book and a half of the collection of the Soviet agent Erich Stinnes, and has a final showdown with his wife Fiona, who went over to the East in this first book; and it is now a KGB colonel with an office in Berlin. But, of course, no showdown is absolutely final; as Bernard points out to his faithful sidekick, Werner Volkmann, on the last page: "It's not going, set and match to Fiona. It's not game, set and match to anyone. It never is." Which shows up the neat progression of titles for the gimmick in it. There's no change, no development over the three books. Dicky Cruyer, Samson's superior, is the same person on his last appearance as he was on his first. Deighton hasn't written a bigger book, merely a longer one.

earlier he would probably have crammed the whole thing into two hundred odd pages, instead of one thousand and ninety.

This said, the final volume is probably the best of the three. The complex pattern of plot and counter-plot is traced deftly and excitingly. There are more scenes set in Berlin, which Deighton has always described brilliantly, and this makes up for an occasional unsureness in dealing with contemporary England, and on uncharacteristic sentimentality. Earlier, with a stroke of genius, he set Bernard and Fiona against one another, not only as intelligence agents, but also as separated husband and wife, adding a domestic dimension to the espionage game. Now, in a moment of weakness, he forces a beautiful nineteen-year-old blonde who works for the department to fall in love with his fat middle-aged hero. The only redeeming thought is that she too is being groomed for defection: she's half-Hungarian – and that Samson will end up as the only man to have been cuckolded, twice, by an ideology.

T. J. Bonyon

## Hanif Kureishi

VED MEHTA

Sound-Shadow of the New World

330pp. Collins. £15.

0002160927

At four years of age Ved Mehta was totally blinded by meningitis. He may not know how things look but he knows intensely how they feel and he knows how to remember. Perhaps he remembers too much and too well. *Sound-Shadow of the New World* is the fifth volume of his autobiography (taking us up to the end of his teens), and at least two of his other books, *Walking the Indian Streets* and *A Portrait of India* are autobiographical.

This volume covers the three years he spent at the Arkansas School for the Blind between 1949 and 1951. In essence it is a story of ambition and overcoming. A blind boy from a poor country, India, goes to the United States, finds it strange but studies hard, meets girls, makes close friends with boys, and wins the school's medal. Ambition, which saves him from becoming a beggar, shopkeeper or hawker, also saves him from becoming a small operator, piano tuner or basket-maker, the usual occupations of the blind in the United States at that time.

At the school he learns what divorce is, what it is like, that Americans wear underpants and that peaches are to do with girls. He is about prejudice against Negroes; and his father shares it. "At home we worried about the school might be for Negroes," he writes about being mistaken for one. "The holidays he works at an ice-cream parlor, tries to date someone working there, and then he has to be satisfied with a girl at home and he has to be satisfied with pleasures. 'I used to wait for our father to share it. I could hear Gladys munching and I could hear her say 'I love you'."

Mehta's autobiographical fashion and his "I love you" he lovingly recreates. His father, there is the community of boys and there is the gym, the school and the father. And sketches of various people and the usual traumas of grow-

ing up; and there is the piano teacher who tries to convert the Hindu boy to Christianity, begging him to pray with her beside the piano. Mehta, sweating and suffocating, says he must think. "Think!" he cried. "What is there to think when He is calling you?"

At the end of the book he is saddened by the fact that in later years his old school friends are not interested in discussing the past. "I myself don't wish total amnesia on him, only selective amnesia. There is much trivia in this book, many letters from his father needlessly quoted, school reports, and over-long extracts from juvenile diaries. When a detail occurs to him he cannot resist giving it to us. 'Lois cleared her throat in English class today. I thought of Mama's cough.' Mehta is no Proust; he is not able to transform obsessive remembering into literature."

He can, though, give us a good sense of what it is to be blind. Sighted people often shout to you as if you were stupid; or they try to pick you up and carry you across the street as if you were crippled too; blind people often feel they are disappointments to their parents. And there is a terrifying, rather filmic description of his first solo shopping expedition in America: "careering down the street to catch a trolley and crashing into a bench, nervous on the trolley that people will know that he is blind and, pitying him or worse, give up their seats for him; thinking bitterly, 'no matter how we might excel in our terms, next to horses we would always appear to be jackasses'."

It is difficult to know why this book has been written. Not because it is uninteresting or badly written but because Mehta has said it all before in his earlier autobiography *Face To Face*. That book covers a longer period but a third of it is taken up with the same material. In the Arkansas section the story told is the same, some chapter headings are the same, incidents are repeated, though some are slightly different, and his point of view hasn't changed since 1951 when *Face To Face* was published. In 1958 when *Face To Face* was published, added *Sound-Shadow* Mehta has developed, added and embellished things, but it reads as if he has strained to do this. His story is better told more concisely, as in *Face To Face*, where we get a greater sense of a whole life.

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# COMMENTARY

## Womanist perspectives

Peter Kemp

Alice Walker and the Color Purple Omnibus  
BBC1

The trouble with William Faulkner's black woman, Dilsey, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Alice Walker complained on *Omnibus*, is that "she has no context". Eager to avoid this error, Samira Osman's film, *Alice Walker and The Color Purple*, brought background into the foreground. Stressing that Walker's fiction is "deeply rooted in the past of Eatonton", her Georgia hometown, it rambled among the verandah-ed mansions formerly belonging to white plantation owners and instructively poked around a shack once occupied by the Walker family and still decorated with the brown-paper-bags they had to use as wallpaper.

Part of this tour of Eatonton was supplied by the author's brother, who pointed out such family landmarks as the store where their father - defying death-threats - cast the first black vote in the county. Ramotom ancestors received attention, too. Strolling among the lopsided grey stones of a local cemetery, Alice Walker explained that *The Color Purple* (1983) - her novel set in the segregated South of the 1920s and 30s - exhumes several of her forebears. Celie, its crushed heroine, represents a reincarnation of her step-grandmother, a woman "nobody ever really knew because she was so hattered down". The man responsible

for this hattering - Walker's grandfather, also resurrected in the book - was typical of many black males of that period and place, she observed, in trying to boost self-esteem by subjecting his wife to the brutal ignominy he encountered from whites.

All this past is powerfully present in *The Color Purple* - as are other historical dimensions. Celie's story of degeneration and regeneration in the Deep South is counterpointed by the experiences of her sister Nettie who is a missionary in Africa. The village life discovered there emerges as a lost heritage - though one viewed with tough unsentimentality; alongside pride are ugly instances of prejudice. This African past - ignored by *Omnibus* - constitutes an important aspect of Walker's writing. Ethnic origins and folk traditions fascinate her - and not only those of her own people. The destruction of the culture of America's Indians is lamented in one novel, where the numinous is quenched with asphalt as a sacred burial-site gets desecrated into a fun-park.

Archive film of black labourers dragging sacks around cotton fields or hacking with a kind of hither listlessness at sugar cane reminded you of the world out of which Alice Walker emerged (even her surname, she remarked, harks back to a slave-ancestress who trudged from Virginia to Georgia). A less familiar perspective on to black exploitation was opened up through reference to Phyllis Wheatley, "negro servant to Mr Wheatley", whose *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* made her something of a society pet in the seventeenth century. Wheatley, Alice Walker revealed, is one of her literary enthusiasms - as is the twentieth-century writer, Zora Neale Hurston. Characteristically, what she relishes in them is their documenting of earlier phases of black experience: there's "a lot of record-keeping" in Wheatley; Hurston wrote partly as an anthropologist. Both have been ridiculed by black radicals, so Walker's championing of them is additional testimony to her challenging of oppression - even in its more subtle ideological forms.

Walker's involvement with the Civil Rights Movement was rather by-passed in this programme because of concentration on *The Color Purple* and its filming. Some nice ironies were pointed up, though - as with coverage of a benefit performance of *The Color Purple* in a once-segregated cinema in Eatonton. Less cheering was some specious-sounding justification from Steven Spielberg about his box-office bowdlerizations when transferring the book to the screen.

Contrasting with his haverings and equivocations was a moment when Walker briskly defined why she calls herself not a feminist but a "womanist". The word, she explained, derives "from the black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish'... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour". Adding to this the connotations, "a woman who loves other women" and "wanting to know more in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one", she turned the term into a portentous description of the behaviour most extensively exhibited in her novels. Militancy, female solidarity, and knowledge are the values her books cherish, with the last seen, as especially liberating. Freed from under-privilege by scholarships herself, Walker always presents education as a major means of emancipation. In *Meridian*, 1982, the heroine's schoolteacher mother is castigated for failing to pass useful knowledge on to younger women. *The Color Purple* shows Nettie teaching and learning valuably in Africa; information frees characters from guilt of inhibition; learning to read is a crucial accomplishment. Battling with facts itself, *Omnibus*'s film demonstrated a similar instructive aim.

The 1986 Pausanias Prize, for a non-fiction work which has contributed most to "an understanding of women's position in society today", has been won by Marina Warner, for *Monuments and Maidens: An allegory of the female form*, 1985. The short-list included *Women and the Law*, by Susan Sontag, and Brenda Hogan's *The Women of the South*. Reviewed by Bea Campbell

## Press gangs

Michael Davies

DAVID WILLIAMSON  
Sons of Cain  
Wyndham's Theatre

The doings of writers and reporters are notoriously difficult to show on the screen or stage. Many good journalists, in life, are modest, even tidy, characters, capable of quiet hard work and ordinary home lives; but a journalist in a fictional drama is almost invariably male, drunk, dishevelled, and given to shouting at his employers.

In David Williamson's new play, *Sons of Cain*, the first appearance of his hero causes the heart to sink. He is a classic stereotype: foul-mouthed, dependant on whisky, lamenting his ruined physical condition, nursing the wounds of a wrecked marriage, and hitting half-heartedly at his sagging trousers. When he is persuaded by his old mate, now a well-tailored and blow-dried executive, to take on the editorship of an ailing newspaper with a brief to expose corruption in Australia, the prospect that anything novel, entertaining, or powerful will take place on the stage seems unlikely. But in some measure the play has all these qualities. Williamson does not avoid cliché, but he uses them with skill, making them work for him.

The story reflects recent events in New South Wales: the backdrop of the clever and effective set shows the skyline of Sydney. The state is in the grip of drug dealers, crooked policemen, and venal lawyers and politicians. Pay-offs and cover-ups are rife, and the ruling Labor Party premier is blandly complacent. The press has been tamed by fear of the libel laws or by anxiety about falling circulation; and the readers, it seems, are content to be fed bromides by the politicians and "lifestyle" trivia by the journalists. The new editor, however, is not interested in circulation; he replaces his predecessor's visual display unit with

his portable typewriter, hires three new women reporters, and sets to work. A disillusioned and honest ex-policeman supplies him with tapes of telephone conversations, apparently between a corrupt lawyer and a state minister. The first half of the play concerns the battle to get the tapes published; the second half explores the aftermath when a judge, probably suborned, declares their use as evidence inadmissible, the newspaper's proprietor reconsiders his reluctant support after an old school friend is implicated, and the staff question the editor's methods and motives.

Although serious, the play is very funny. One of Williamson's gifts as a playwright and screen writer has always been his sure use of the wry, quintessentially Australian idiom. The play crackles with very Australian jokes and the humour is much more subtle than it was in the comic strip farce of *Pravda*, last year's big newspaper drama. Max Cullen, who plays the editor, has the best of the lines, which are deployed to reveal that despite his rough exterior he is an emotional weakling. The three women reporters are stronger characters than their editor. Again, although they seem on first impression to be stereotypes - a blithering radical with a sister who is an addict; a tough older woman with dreams of a rich husband; and a perky feminist who pines for a real man - their characters, like the whole play, are more subtle than at first appears. Williamson does not pretend that the decisions the editor takes are the paper's manager and proprietor to take as easy.

*Sons of Cain* is not mainly interested in character or motive, and the plot, though adequate, is not the point either. What Williamson has done is to write a contemporary morality play, in which a hattered warrior for truth takes on the dark powers of corruption and greed. Both in the writing and in the fine performance by Max Cullen you sense a real passion, a sense of outrage that Australia, once a country offering the promise of a fresh start, should now be perverted and undermined by moral cowardice and crooks.

## Sin in the streets

Philip Horne

After Hours  
Warner West End Cinema

"You don't pay for your sins in church, but in the streets", said the voice of Martin Scorsese at the very start of his *Mean Streets* (1973). The streets in question then were those of New York's Little Italy. In *After Hours*, after twelve years in which Scorsese has made *Taxi Driver*, *New York, New York*, *Raging Bull* and *King of Comedy*, the streets have become those of SoHo, but the guilt is no less intense. *After Hours* is funny and terrible, and draining, as much a horror film as a comedy, fiercely and disturbingly surreal in its lurid detail, almost perfectly consistent in its plotting.

It has the shape of the best horror films - and perhaps of the best comedies - in that its story of realized anxieties is framed and pointed as an externalization of the central character's unease. Scorsese's complex cinematic style - constant movement of the camera, use of slow motion and fast editing and not-quite "natural" sound to convey the rhythms of excitement - hurries us into the fraught perceptual world of the yuppie Paul (Griffin Dunne), whose 11.32pm excursion, on a sudden date from his East 51st Street apartment, downtown into unrespectable SoHo seems to go so recurrently wrong.

Paul overflows with guilty apologies. Near the end, trapped and desperate, he goes down on his knees in the middle of the street, and looks straight up at where the camera, thirty feet above, has a God's eye view. "What do you want from me?", he asks. "What have I done? I'm just a word processor, for Christ's sake!" He is persecuted by objects, by events, by chance remarks and ultimately by a vigilante mob who take him for a burglar and whose searching flashlight are associated with one manically wielded by Martin Scorsese himself, overhead in the pink "Club Bar



Zeus from the sea at Artemisium, about 450-500 BC; reproduced from Greek sculpture, reviewed below.

## Tangible evidence

B. F. Cook

MR BOARDMAN

Greek Sculpture: The classical period: a handbook  
Thames and Hudson. £12.50.  
050234191

It has become a truism in the defence of new studies in Classics that each generation must re-evaluate the evidence and make its own assessment of Greek and Roman civilization. In archaeology that defence is scarcely required, since each generation must assimilate and interpret newly discovered evidence which constantly appears in quantities unmatched in other branches of classical studies, even papyrology. It would be difficult to find an institution, at least in Britain, where this challenge has been met more consistently than the Linde Chair of Art and Archaeology at Oxford, with its four successive incumbents. The chapters written between 1924 and 1928 for various issues of the old *Cambridge Ancient History* by J. D. (later Sir John) Beazley and Bernard Ashmole (then still Yates Professor in London) were republished as *Greek Sculpture and Pottery* in 1932. They served as a standard introduction to the subject for many years, being reprinted as recently as 1966. Ashmole's section, *History of Greek Art* (1975), which gave the lie to the strictures of Callias against big books. The present Lincoln Professor, John Boardman, is continuing the tradition with a series of handbooks of which this is the fourth, two earlier volumes having dealt with Attic vase-painting, the third with Greek sculpture.

Professor Boardman's scholarly output is prolific and he has made significant original contributions in several areas. He has also been an archaeologist for many years and his handbooks clearly reflect that experience not only in his style of writing, which often has a conversational tone, reflecting the lecture-room more than the study, but also in his recognition that in many respects the Greek world was a fundamentally alien place, even for those best qualified to recognize our cultural debt to it. Those beginning to approach the problems of Greek sculpture in the classical period, to whom the book is primarily addressed, would be well advised to heed his warning: "Pursuing the problem beyond our wit but the attempt is a heroic reward enough". The problem which constantly besets stu-

dents and critics, archaeologists and art historians alike is the fragmentary nature of the evidence, in particular the relative scarcity of original works. Boardman's approach is rigorous. Throughout the book he concentrates as far as possible on originals. Later copies cannot be avoided, for they often provide the only tangible evidence we have to put flesh on the rather skeletal accounts of ancient sculpture that have survived in the writings of men like the encyclopaedist Pliney and the travel-writer Pausanias. Boardman keeps these copies firmly in their place, usually segregated in separate chapters.

His opinions on the attributions proposed for many classical sculptures must be sought in the detailed captions to individual illustrations. In general he remains sceptical about the validity of many attributions and even about the value of the scholarly method which underlies them - "perhaps the oddest phenomenon in all Classical scholarship". He does accept some attributions - such as Myron's *Discus-thrower*, recognized since the eighteenth century on the basis of numerous Roman copies and an unusually detailed description by Lucian - but many attributions freely accepted elsewhere are either suppressed or recorded only with an explicit warning or an almost audible lack of enthusiasm. Even the celebrated Ephesian Amazons do not tempt him to commit himself.

Nor do the two bronze figures found in the sea off Riace in 1972, which have been variously attributed to the otherwise obscure Onatas and to no less a master than Phidias. These statues are forcing scholars to rewrite the history of Greek sculpture in the middle of the fifth century BC (they were not available to Robertson) and a consensus has yet to be reached on their attribution, likely original provenance, even on their date. (For those who wish to pursue the Riace bronzes further, required reading now includes the third volume in the *Special Series of Bollettino d'Arte*.)

A welcome feature of the book is an exposition of Boardman's interpretation of the Parthenon frieze, which, apart from its presentation as a memorable television programme, had previously been available only in scholarly works published abroad and rarely to be found outside specialized libraries. Professor Boardman's view that the horsemen and the passengers in the chariots represent the Athenian heroes who perished at Marathon being presented to the gods of Olympus has much to commend it. Indeed the book has a whole lot to be commended: it will be read with profit by all but the most learned, and with pleasure by all.

## Festal sublimities

Penelope Wilson

ANNE PIPPIN BURNETT  
The Art of Bacchylides  
207pp. Harvard University Press. £20.50.  
0674046658  
D. S. CARNE-ROSS  
Pindar  
195pp. Yale University Press. £25 (paperback, £6.95).  
0300033834

According to Thomas de Quincey, "the chief thing to say as to Pindar is - to show cause, good and reasonable, why no man of sense should trouble his head about him". Poets and pedagogues since the Renaissance have struggled against the odds to find a way of regaining cultural access to the odes in which "the prince of lyric poets" celebrated the athletic champions of his time. The apparent discrepancy between the sporting occasion and the elaborate and mythic grandeur of his victory ("epinician") odes led to the construction of a satisfyingly personalized "Pindaric" image of wild and inspired irrelevance. The problems are now seen more as a matter of genre than of individual eccentricity. In his eleventh ode, for example, Pindar's contemporary Bacchylides celebrates a South Italian boy's wrestling victory in the Pythian games with what appears to be a hugely inappropriate tale of female lunacy, of the maddened daughters of Proteus howling across the woods and pastures of Arcadia. The myth may relate clearly enough at one level to the criticism already expressed of the "wandering wits" of an earlier set of judges who had denied the boy victory at Olympia; but the modern reader, unsure in any case where to draw the line between legitimate celebration and unctuous flattery, may still feel entitled to wonder at the literary etiquette of this mythological dilation on the theme of shooting the referee.

Studies of the victory ode tend therefore to find themselves on the defensive. Both the books under review properly find the formal grammar of victor-praise, seen by some modern scholars as the key to all epinician problems, too limited a means of accounting for the individual achievements of the two poets. Anne Pippin Burnett's way of bringing the reader to terms with what she calls "the epinician burden" in Bacchylides is to open out the larger artistic vision of each ode through close analysis of Bacchylides' manipulations of his fictional and generic materials. Her method is well illustrated in her reading of the interlocking myths and motifs of Ode 11, placing the vagaries of judges and daughters within a central celebration not merely of a victory but of the strength of the city itself against a backdrop of error and wilderness. Each case is closely contextualized, and backed in the notes with a wealth of scholarly material and discussion - the chapter on "Theseus' dive" in the non-epinician Ode 17, a song for Delian Apollo, offers a fascinating compilation of the evidence about leaps and dives in antiquity.

If Pindar's after-life has been one of engaged controversy, Bacchylides has suffered from an unenviable consensus in which - long before the discovery at the end of the nineteenth century of the papyrus containing the remains of fifteen odes and six "dithyrambs" - he was

known simply as Pindar's boringly competent rival. "Would you not rather be Pindar than Bacchylides?" asked "Longinus" in the first century AD, and it is clear from the passing references in D. S. Carne-Ross's book that the nature as well as the habit of the comparison survives more or less unchanged: again and again Pindar's special quality is defined in relation to this "modest, somewhat anonymous performer". In her welcome full-length critical study of Bacchylides, Burnett generally eschews explicit comparative assessments, but she does introduce a challenging new element into the traditional picture in her emphasis on the tragic flavour of Bacchylides' ethical vision, the vision which presents heroes moving with less assurance than Pindar's in a landscape of uncertainty. "The Bacchylidean gods were further away": Heracles weeps for his own fate as he views its shadowy outline in Melaeus's ghost.

Burnett's work is accorded the full format of erudition, the critical discussion supplemented with the full Greek text of the odes treated as well as a translation and with nearly fifty pages of scholarly notes. Carne-Ross's *Pindar* appears in the *Hermes* series, whose aim, as stated by the general editor John Herington, is to "guide the general reader to a dialogue with the classical masters rather than to acquaint him or her with the present state of scholarly research". There are virtually no footnotes, and Greek script is allowed to appear only as a curiously typographical gnuifletto signalling the gap between our own "diven world" and Pindar's voice. For Carne-Ross the solution to modern difficulties with Pindar's forms and values is less a matter of interpretation than of the re-education of the reader, who is constantly urged towards a Nietzschean acceptance of the transfiguring and erotic power of victory in the hands of a master-poet, a festal sublimity in which the sweetness of celebration is fused with the violence of contest. He, too, offers readings of individual odes, but couched in a vocabulary so dominantly evaluative as to insist that we not so much understand as revere them. The policy is to establish "contact" with Pindar - for example through association with modernist poetry - before allowing us to knit our brows over him. Carne-Ross's selection of odes for this purpose is interestingly and profitably at variance with the traditional rankings, and he shows a clear preference for the more relaxed Aegina odes over the "big poems", like the first Pythian, produced for the Sicilian tyrants. Despite the intrusiveness of the over-anxious humanist polemic, there is much that is fresh and stimulating in his observations on individual odes.

Carne-Ross's Pindaric register will have its aficionados among like-minded classicists, and "general readers". Paradoxically however it is this introductory work which in the end places us as helplessly estranged from the voices of the past, while the specialist researches of Burnett generate an excitement that might well - were it not for the old assumption that scholarship alienates common readers - tempt a newcomer further into the Greek choral ode.

Princeton University Press have recently published the first English translation of P. A. Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer*, 1795 (265pp, £30.25, 0 691 06639 6). The translators also provide an introduction and notes.

## HOW POETRY WORKS

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# Mirror images

Willibald Sauerländer

**Émile Mâle**  
*Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century: A study of medieval iconography and its sources*  
Translated by Marthel Mathews  
564pp. Princeton University Press. £57.60.  
0691 099138

Émile Mâle's *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle en France* was first published in 1898, curiously enough in the same year as Huysmans's famous neo-Catholic novel *La Cathédrale*. No other book on medieval art has ever had a comparable success. No fewer than nine editions had appeared by 1958. Not only very learned but written with a suave poetic elegance, Mâle's book charmed readers from the most unexpected quarters, but it aroused uneasy feelings in the "jury" at the Sorbonne, where he presented it as a thesis. "Certain chapters", one reads in the official report of the dean, "combine the merits of research with the charm of an ingenious, animated and lively presentation which recalls sometimes the poetry of the Golden Legend." And then it continues with academic sternness: "I have been tempted to blame the author for a purely artistic and relatively free inspiration. Above all I found that the author had himself carried away by a somewhat mystic admiration for the Middle Ages."

One of the first enthusiastic admirers of Mâle's *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* was Marcel Proust. In 1900 he cited the book in an article on Ruakin's "Bible of Amiens" and later he used passages from Mâle as a source for his description of the church at Balbec in *À la Recherche du temps perdu*. Another fascinated reader was D'Annunzio, who quarried Mâle's text for the prologue of his *Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, first presented by Ida Rubinstein at the Théâtre du Châtelet in 1911. Mâle's book is not only a monument of scholarship but also a part of the history of French literature at the turn of the century.

Medieval religious iconography had not been studied seriously before 1840. The rediscovery of the Catholic past of France came as a reaction to the Voltairian biases of the Enlightenment and the Jacobin destructions of the Revolution. In 1833 De Montalambert published his "Lettre sur le vandalisme en France". In 1844 appeared the first part of Didron's never completed *Iconographie chrétienne*, which dealt with the "Histoire du Dieu". Then followed an uninterrupted stream

of manuals, periodicals and monographs of Christian iconography, which were mostly produced by learned and pious fathers or abbés. The most outstanding of these publications, the four-volume *Mélanges d'archéologie, d'histoire et de littérature sur le moyen âge*, which remains today a mine of information, was the work of two Jesuits: Charles Cahier and Arthur Martin. Émile Mâle, born in 1862, was the late heir of this nineteenth-century Catholic tradition. But he transformed it with a unique force of synthesis and a rare literary gift, and made medieval religious iconography part of a modern aesthetic culture. In 1907 Proust wrote to Mâle: "I have often thought of you these days in turning the pages of these bulky, undigested books such as the *Caractéristiques des Saints* of Father Cahier".

*L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* is an admirably structured book. With a stroke of genius Mâle organized his presentation of the bewildering profusion of imagery in Gothic cathedrals along the line of a great scholastic summa, the *Speculum Majus* by Vincent of Beauvais. In this way he was able to handle the cathedral like a book, to consult it like an encyclopaedia, neatly divided into sections and chapters. He starts with the "mirror of nature" and looks on the plants and beasts visible on the buildings. He speaks of the symbols of the Evangelists, of the bestiary and the marvels of the East. Next he ascends to the "Speculum doctrinale", the "mirror of learning", and explains the calendars which show the skills and the tools necessary for manual labour. From there he carries on to philosophy and the liberal arts, the labour of the mind. He concludes: "Work in all its forms is to be respected: such is the lesson taught by the cathedral."

"Nature, knowledge, virtue" — this is the sequence of the *Speculum Majus*. So the following chapter rises to the "mirror of morals" and deals brilliantly with the iconography of the virtues and vices. By far the longest and most complex part of the book, however, is devoted to the fourth and last mirror, the "Speculum historiale". Here we pass from the Old Testament to the Gospels, from the traditional legends to the *Legenda Aurea*, and after an interpolation on Antiquity we finish with the end of history, the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment. The order of this presentation is superb. The book is a masterpiece of rational classification. The thirteenth-century portal at Amiens is for Mâle as comprehensive and systematic as Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*. Religious art in the thirteenth century is the harmonious union of reason and faith

achieved by the genius of France. "The ideas embodied in our cathedrals were the common patrimony of Catholic Europe. But France alone was able to make of the cathedral an image of the world, a summary of history, and a mirror of moral life." It was this unique blend of intellectual lucidity and religious conviction, that assured the success of this work.

After nearly a century, Mâle's intellectual and moral achievement requires to be read in historical perspective. In 1898, in the critical years before the separation of Church and State in France, *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* was written as a combative apology. It was a poetically moving refutation of the laicizing ideas of Victor Hugo and Viollet-le-Duc on the anti-ecclesiastical and democratic character of Gothic art. After 400 pages of demonstration Mâle sums up triumphantly: "No. The artists of the Middle Ages were neither rebels nor 'thinkers' nor precursors of the Revolution." Even if this conclusion seems largely valid, the reader of today can hardly overlook that *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* is a product of the late nineteenth century and did not totally escape the modernism it struggled so emphatically to refute. Sentences such as "The cathedral was the conscience of the city... rich and poor enjoyed the same art" remain closer to the ideas of Hugo and Viollet-le-Duc than one seems to have realized until now. Mâle opposed the liberal fancies of the "freedom of the press" in thirteenth-century art with the Romantic myth of the cathedral as "the mighty hull", in which "the whole city could safely embark". It is a beautiful dream but it seems less inspired by Vincent of Beauvais than by Michelet. "Liberté" may have been exorcized, but "fraternité" and "égalité" remain present in Mâle's image of the medieval cathedral.

The classic text of 1898 here receives a welcome second English edition. However, one would have liked to read an introduction describing for the modern reader Mâle's achievement and his place in the history of scholarship and taste. Our present habit of putting past scholarly books on the market without comment as if they had been written yesterday, reveals a shocking loss of historical perspective and confuses students, who are exposed to floods of undigested information. The addition of some supplementary footnotes is of little help, merely degrading a masterpiece of iconography to an iconographic manual, which can be brought up to date by simply feeding in recent bibliography. Marthel Mathews's translation is sensitive and echoes something of the poetic lightness of Mâle's elegant French.

ing of the church of San Salvatore; the Scuola di San Rocco; and Daniele Barbaro's edition of Vitruvius, as well as an introduction on the relation between the attitudes and values of the patricians of Venice and the buildings they commissioned, public and private: There are some fascinating discussions of unrealized projects, of "Unbuilt Venice".

The threads uniting this rather diverse collection of case-studies are the three themes of the subtitle — religion, science, architecture — and a fourth, at least equally central: politics. Of these four themes the least important is science. Daniele Barbaro's interests in perspective, clocks and botanical gardens are all mentioned, and Galileo makes an appearance from time to time, but the thrust of the book is not in this direction. Religion is rather more significant: Venice as Jerusalem, a sacred city; San Francesco della Vigna as a sacred space, where the angel appeared to St Mark, and so on. Tafuri is particularly interested in unorthodoxy, and one of his most interesting points is that the architect Sebastiano Serlio dedicated the fifth book of his treatise on architecture to the princess Marguerite de Navarre, patron and defender of the unorthodox, quoting — ironically for an architect — St Paul's statement that "ye are the temple of the living God". Whether Serlio's evangelical opinions affected his architecture remains unclear.

The links between architecture and politics, on the other hand, are rather more obvious. Tafuri notes the contrast between the relatively simple, modest houses built by leading patricians such as the doges Andrea Gritti and Leonardo Donà, and the magnificent public

works undertaken in the same period, notably Jacopo Sansovino's Library of St Mark's, which Palladio called "the most ornate building since antiquity". The contrast can be read as an expression of the values of civic humanism, the official ideology of the Venetian Republic (in the Republic of Genoa, on the other hand, private affluence and public squalor were all too manifest).

*Venezia e il Rinascimento* is a dense book, packed with information, not all of it of direct relevance to the general argument. Like a good historian, Tafuri loves documents and what he calls "philology" (in the wide Italian sense of the term). He also has a strong urge to speculate, and a weakness for arguing that because Serlio, say, knows the scholar Achilla Bocchi, and Bocchi knows the beretie Camillo Renato, the three men can be assumed to have shared "a common religious attitude". His book is more than a collection of essays, but less than a synthesis. It seems designed to provoke conflict rather than to encourage harmony. However, it is full of insights, iconographical and political, and it makes an important contribution to the integration of architecture into general history.

Recently published is *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, Volume One, 1985 (Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Via di Vincigliata 26, 50135 Florence, Italy. 312pp. 0393 5949), a journal "devoted to all those aspects of the Italian Renaissance that the Harvard Center itself aims to explore".

# Artistic egos

David Carrier

**ELLEN HANDLER SPITZ**  
*Art and Psyche*  
168pp. Yale University Press. £18.95.  
0300 033729

Seeking to create a dialogue between mainstream American psychoanalysis and aesthetics, *Art and Psyche* investigates three models of interpretation. Pathography interprets the artwork in relation to the artist's childhood; alternatively, analysts focus on the artwork itself, and upon the relationship between that work and its audience. Freud's *Leonardo* is the classic model of pathography; either reveal psychoanalytic accounts discuss what is internal to the work, its style; and the therapist-patient relation provides a model for the experience of art. This tripartite structure, Ellen Spitz argues, does "encompass the existing literature" and so provides "a scaffolding for further interdisciplinary refinement".

The most obvious trouble with her position is that its focus is both too broad and too narrow. In presenting the debate between Moyer Schapiro and Freud on Leonardo, Leo Steinberg's critique of Liebert's *Michelangelo*, Richard Wollheim versus Paul Ricoeur on the place of Freud's aesthetic in the development of psychoanalysis, and E. H. Gombrich and D. W. Winnicott on artworks and transitional objects, she both assumes prior knowledge of these texts and provides argumentation which does not go very deep. Perhaps because she is too close to her subject, Spitz includes many technical details without effectively motivating the discussion.

Though her account is technical, Spitz's claims are often elementary. Who doubts that Albert's and Mendrian's activity involved "functions of the ego" or that reacting to a murder in *Julius Caesar* is different from a piercing "a similar scene... on a street outside the theatre after the play"? The aesthetician will not find these claims novel. But when Spitz advances beyond such banalities, reveals a shocking loss of historical perspective and confuses students, who are exposed to floods of undigested information. The addition of some supplementary footnotes is of little help, merely degrading a masterpiece of iconography to an iconographic manual, which can be brought up to date by simply feeding in recent bibliography. Marthel Mathews's translation is sensitive and echoes something of the poetic lightness of Mâle's elegant French.

Leaving aside such details, the general question *Art and Psyche* inadvertently poses is whether psychoanalytic aesthetics is a genuine discipline. Pathography has been questioned by Foucault's and Barthes's highly influential accounts of "the death of the author"; the belief that we can analyse the artwork in isolation is, as Spitz notes, dependent upon a problematic identification of what is internal to the work; and the parallels between speculative and patients are surely limited. Gombrich has noted that as an art lover Freud was a man of his time; *Leonardo* is closer to Walter Pater's 1900 essay on the artist than a modern account. Psychoanalysts have gone over Freud's head many times, and by now this "secondary elaboration" has become tedious. Stimulating recent work in psychoanalytic aesthetics comes from Hubert Damisch and Carlo Ginzburg, and Freud to Morelli; Joseph Masheck, a student of Schapiro, has discussed Kirchner; Leo Bersani, T. J. Clark and Norman Bryson have been influenced by Lacan. But when Spitz relates Barnett Newman's "zip" to a child's right position or notes that his overwriting "devoted to all those aspects of the Italian Renaissance that the Harvard Center itself aims to explore".

# Reading the mind-readers

Dan Gunn

**JEFFREY BERMAN**  
*The Talking Cure: Literary representations of psychoanalysis*  
304pp. New York University Press. \$42.50.  
081070751  
**JANE GALLOP**  
*Reading Lacan*  
196pp. Cornell University Press. \$21.95.  
0801415853

Psychoanalysis is a practice that spans national frontiers and whose history has been bound up with international movements; yet it remains at the same time deeply marked by national myths and styles. To read these two books is to be reminded of this. Both are by Americans who are passionately committed to psychoanalysis and its relevance to reading; but while Jeffrey Berman writes from within the mainstream of American psychology, Jane Gallop writes under the influence of the French, with a view to promoting Lacan in America.

*The Talking Cure* is a long, thorough, at times slightly repetitive enquiry into how literature has represented psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis. It seeks to offer insight into "the fascinating relationship between the creative and therapeutic process, and the cross-fertilization of literature and psychoanalysis". And it is a curious — though in the analytic context perhaps unsurprising — paradox that it best achieves this when it faces up to the basic poverty of its chosen area: few "literary" writers, at least among those Berman considers, have written either sympathetically or illuminatingly about psychoanalysis.

What we find instead is a parade of stereotyped, wayward, megalomaniac analysis, and various forms of psychiatric and institutional brutality which seem to have little to do with the legacy of Freud. Or — when a writer does engage with psychoanalysis properly — a reticence or resistance which leaves the inquiry guessing. Such reticence seems to put the value of Berman's hook in question. But it is precisely when he faces up to the questions posed by it that his book offers most insights into literature, and is at the same time most convincingly "psychoanalytic". When he asks these questions he tends to make up for the feeble representation of psychoanalysis in fiction by a superabundance of his own, albeit superior, analytic interpretation. And this is dangerous. It leads him to some highly speculative psychoanalysis of fictional characters, some questionable interpretation of authors' biographical details, and some very debatable literary judgments — it can only be gratitude which makes him conclude that "Reading D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* is like discovering a lost Shakespeare play". Berman talks interestingly about transference; yet his own term of "transference", on to the rare author who has the merit of at least taking psychoanalysis seriously, passes unanalysed. After a brief introductory consideration of Freud's case histories, Berman reminds the reader of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's wonderful and disturbing story, "The Yellow Wallpaper". He comes up, as he does throughout the book, with some fascinating evidence: here, on the history of Gilman's own illness and the nature of S. Weir Mitchell's "rest cure", which threatened to drive her permanently mad, and which partly inspired the story. The mechanisms and dangers of transference and counter-transference are discussed in relation to *Tender is the Night*; a long chapter is devoted to *The Cockatoo Party*; and the letters of Sylvia Plath are minutely sifted for any comments on analysis and for what they might offer towards an understanding of *The Bell Jar*.

What repeatedly strikes the reader, however, despite Berman's thorough research, is how obliquely if not obusely writers have dealt with psychoanalysis. And where little material is available, as in the case of Eliot, Berman attempts to provide it.

The psychosexual implications (of Celia Copple's death in *The Cockatoo Party*) are intriguing. On an oral level, the psychiatrist is merging with the patient in a mystical union; incorporating her pangs of grief. On an anal level, he is seductively killing her off and casting her away. On a phallic level, he

with this or that detail; rather it is the accumulation of such interpretations that is problematic. Psychoanalysts are taught to beware of the potential violence of interpretation; for their part, literary critics must be careful not to striculate and amplify the text to the extent of appropriating it. In either case it is the specificity and strangeness of the other (or object) which is threatened; the specificity and strangeness which characterize manifestations of the unconscious or, equally, the literary text and its allusions.

Despite Berman's persuasive tone, his careful groundwork and simple documentation, fiction and reality, the author's biography and the limited facts of his or her characters' lives, do end up, if not confused, then all sounding very much of a piece. For Berman, the central problem of *The White Hotel* is whether the heroine's premonitory dreams and symptoms ultimately lend themselves to psychoanalysis or to mysticism. He concludes that her death indicates the limits of psychoanalysis, and that Thomas therefore ultimately embraces transcendentalism. The objection to this is not just that the limits of the psychoanalytic perspective in the novel are stated out well before this by the caricature of Freud we find there. It is that the undeclared but insistent desire of Thomas the storyteller goes completely unquestioned.

Psychoanalysis at such moments seems to colude with literary representations of itself. There is a violence in *The White Hotel* other than the explicit violence, and it inheres in the way the author maps out his heroine's "fate" as testament to his own control — a control magnified to omnipotence when her fate is yoked to that of the rewritten destiny of a whole people.

So it is not when Berman is trying to elaborate a text's half-hearted psychoanalytic episodes that his own brand of psychoanalysis seems appropriate. Rather, it is when he discusses the limits of fictive psychoanalysis (as in the chapters on Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* and on Philip Roth), or fiction's hostility to psychoanalysis (as in his interesting chapter on Nabokov), that Berman is able to illuminate the authors' silences rather than fill them with his own interpretations. His ideal analyst is in fact a very "empathic" figure. Indeed, the limits and scope of his approach are perhaps best indicated by his own view of what such a figure can achieve: "Progress in psychotherapy is measured... by the agonizingly slow development of ego strengths."

Any definition Jane Gallop, a follower of Lacan, might give of analysis would be radically different, and would almost certainly include mention of the unconscious (or "the discourse

of the other"). She takes six essays from Lacan's *Écrits* and submits them to a close, often line-by-line reading. And reading is the crucial term in her book's title. Gallop is open about her orientation: she is a teacher of humanities, with French as a second language, little or no clinical experience, limited grasp of Lacan, and a disinclination to take his scientific side too seriously. This welcome declaration of modesty goes along with an equally welcome assertion of the right to pick up Lacan and read; subsequently, to write about this reading (which Gallop also takes to be a feminist one). She "would thus transfer Lacan from the psychoanalytic scene to the scene of reading" — "transfer" here retains something of its psychoanalytic connotation. Unlike Berman, Gallop is keenly aware of her own "transference" on to a chosen text.

Difficulty is something all readers of Lacan will have experienced, and Gallop confronts this without embarrassment. In a chapter devoted to the "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*" she shows why Americans in particular have had difficulty with Lacan, who is famous for his virulent anti-Americanism. She locates such two-way hostility in the realm of the "imaginary", and proposes to remove the debate into the "symbolic": this, she says, is the pur-

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pose of psychoanalysis. Her reading of Lacan's essay shows it as a "parable of psychoanalysis" in which the true analyst-figure in Poe's tale is not Dupin (as is often supposed) but the narrator. Gallop may over-simplify the category of the "imaginary" and put more faith in the "symbolic" than is warranted; but her re-reading is none the less intriguing and convincing.

The problem of the way Lacan's work is received remains central to Gallop, and in her chapter on "The Mirror Stage" she seeks to show how "the effect of Lacan's text on his students is analogous to the effect of the mirror on the infant". What is crucial for her in the mirror stage is the establishing of chronology: the way in which an infant both "anticipates" and "retroacts" its own history; but also the way in which Lacan's pupils see his later formulations in his early "Mirror Stage" essay, and the way in which the original of this essay, though often referred to, is in fact untraceable.

Gallop is always ingenious, particularly so in her discussions of "The Freudian Thing" and of "The Subversion of the Subject". But it is in her chapters on feminine sexuality in relation to the essays "The Agency of the Letter" and "The Signification of the Phallus" that her ingenuity seems most powerfully allied to com-

mitment. Through a series of associations on Lacan's ideas of metaphor and metonymy, she shows how metonymy seems to have been associated in Lacan with the feminine and consequently to have been undervalued; she then shows how rivalry between metaphor and metonymy is itself already part of a "phallogocentric interpretive tradition". She goes on to discuss the ambivalence in Lacan's relation to women, which she tracks down to the level of his use of ambiguous phrases which may be lost in translation. She does not seek to resolve this ambivalence; nor should we require her to. Rather she shows how deep it runs.

Also included in *Reading Lacan* are Gallop's accounts of her book's genesis, of its development (through her own brief affair with analysis) and even of a dream she had upon concluding it. At its strongest, Gallop's personal approach gives a sense of involvement in her reading and communicates a sense of the work which is drawing her on. Elsewhere, however, her reading blurs into a "reading" of her own person—or personality. The line dividing these two readings is fine but vital.

Through her modest declaration of her limited qualifications, Gallop leads us to expect a direct engagement with Lacan. Yet repeated-

ly her chapters start and are given momentum by invoking secondary readers or translators (of very varied competence and seriousness): Alan Sheridan, François George, Catherine Clément, Anthony Wilden, Jacques Derrida et al. Among the proliferation of names, the name Lacan threatens at times almost to disappear. Add to this Gallop's desire to show how the reception of Lacan's texts reflects his ideas, and her policy of using Mehlman to read Mehlman, Lacan Lacan (and Derrida to some extent to read them all), and going through her book as if she were walking through an academic hall of mirrors. In the conclusion to her chapter on "The Mirror Stage" she indeed says: "As I thus recognize my chapter as a mirror image of itself, I am jubilant." This reader is rather less so; perhaps even rather excluded by such mirroring, such narcissism.

Another even more serious worry originates in her introductory avowal of her limitations. For only pages later these limitations are turned—almost magically—into their opposite. Lacan, she decides, is all about style; and one is better equipped to understand style than a "professional reader" of literature. Lacan, it is true, was fond of Buffon's maxim "le style est l'homme même"; but it is a big step from this to

the claim that Lacan can best be understood by literary critics attending to the style of his written output (which in any case constituted only a tiny part of his work, most of which was transmitted orally, and was heavily influenced by his editor and son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller).

Gallop's Lacan is a literary and a limited creature, particularly when, as she admits, she resists "touching the beautiful, crazy, violent portions of the text". This does not in itself invalidate her picture of him—except to the extent that she implies that her picture is not in fact a limited one. For Lacan was also a psychiatrist, a major clinician, head of a school, formulator of certain scientific propositions which may indeed be "read", but may also be debated, challenged and developed. These propositions are often surprisingly simple in themselves, even if the commentary upon them is notoriously complex and difficult. His theories are almost invariably better presented and understood by referring back to cocepts of Freud's and they have serious clinical implications. The relation of psychoanalysis to reading, as Gallop and Mehlman in their very different ways and styles both testify, is indeed a complex and a crucial one.

hatred. There are such emotions, but they are emotionally close to their mere perverse variants, and are not identified by standard English names. One can wallow irrationally in what is accurately described as remorse; what is accurately described as regret can be too trivial an emotion for such an occasion; guilt can then be a completely inappropriate emotion.

Taylor's project requires her to work out the contrasts between guilt, regret, and remorse, and at the same time indicate what about these emotions is morally relevant, and what "healthy" or "redeeming". It is not at all clear that these two projects are the same: an elaboration of the contrasts between the ordinary concepts as expressed in the ordinary words may miss some of the morally and psychologically most important features of our emotions. I would be surprised if this were not so, for our ordinary vocabulary here is surely in part an expression of our culture's ideas about character, blame, retribution, and atonement, and these ideas are at the moment very much in transition. Taylor's reluctance to go too far from the contrasts embedded in the meanings of a few English words is reflected in her somewhat cursory treatment of Bernard Williams's examples of situations where something like remorse seems to be required. The challenge the examples present is that of describing the emotion that a responsible person would feel without describing it as a pointless self-indulgence.

These are wishes that Taylor had said more about some things, rather than the self-indulgent emotions of self-assessment, just because the line between the redeeming and the self-indulgent emotions is so hard to draw. And we do need to work out the ways in which emotions can be perverse, self-indulgent, healthily redeeming, or part of what any person of integrity would feel. These are problems that should take up, following where Taylor has begun. For if we understood better the role that self-respect and the emotions of self-assessment play in our lives we could go on to tackle important practical and theoretical tasks. One such practical task is that of describing the ways in which it is and is not appropriate to react to various difficult situations. And one such theoretical task is that of answering the most basic question about the morally important emotions: why do we need them?

Another omission in Taylor's map involves the contrasts between shame, guilt, regret and remorse. The contrast between shame and guilt is drawn in some detail, and is, I think, most in part to be one between shame and the other three. The contrasts between guilt, remorse, and regret, on the other hand, are only sketched, and are not easy to bring into focus. In fact, at one point Taylor remarks that remorse is not really an emotion of self-assessment at all because "in feeling remorse a person's thoughts are not primarily upon himself... He is not seen by some [imagined] audience or judged by some authority." And yet remorse is earlier described as an "eminently healthy and essentially moral emotion, being concerned with the effects of the agent's actions on others in a way that draws him away from self-preoccupation and self-indulgence. She seems to be excluding from her project the emotion which, according to her theory, she ought to be paying most attention to.

Taylor needs, in her characterization of integrity, to be able to describe emotions which have two different sorts of characteristic. On the one hand they must be deep and serious and capable of doing justice to the force of the aversion one can have for one's past actions. On the other hand the core of such an emotion must not be self-indulgence or pointless self-

## Re-arming the intelligence

Francis Steegmüller

MARCEL PROUST  
Correspondence: Tome XIII, 1914  
Edited by Philip Keel  
Translated by Louise Varese  
221 pp. Paris: Plon. 1960fr.  
12500 11985

As this volume opens, in January 1914, Marcel Proust is forty-two years old. His asthma and his habits of work confine him to the bedroom where constant fumigation is his excuse for not receiving visitors. Occasionally he ventures out into what was then "the purer air of evening". Editorial matters are his immediate concern.

The review of *Swann*, published by Grasset the previous November, are still coming in. In the *Nouvelle Revue Française* for January 1 appear the far from flattering assessment by Henri Ghéon, eliciting Proust's celebrated letter in reply: a prelude to the equally famous exchanges with Gide, the NRF's official lister, and the eventual appearance, in the June and July numbers of the magazine, of two sections from the new volume in preparation, *James Fils en fleur*. (All this forms, as it were, a continuous narrative, interrupted by other matters.) Proust's reputation is greatly altered. *Swann* sells 3,600 copies in the first year. Especially to Grasset, and to Jacques Rivière of the NRF, Proust sends the celebrated, interminable, all but illegible letters of text. Grasset has to assign a special assistant to decipher them.

## A womb with a view

Robin Buss

RANCOIS WEYERGANS  
*La Vie d'un bébé*  
220 pp. Paris: Gallimard. 70fr.  
10700745

Rançois Weyergans is not the first novelist to begin the story of his central character nine months before the moment when life, for the purpose of fiction, is commonly supposed to begin, but it is exceptional, for a novel to end with the birth of its narrator, *La Vie d'un bébé* opens a previously unexplored field for the novel of apprenticeship.

It is one which psychologists have long considered worthy of attention. The novelist, though, faces one or two problems when he takes this new sub-genre of "foetal autobiography". The environment is uniform and mainly uneventful, the cast of characters limited. Weyergans says that twins have no need to communicate, since they supply each

Equally prominent in this volume is the fine review of *Swann* by the painter Jacques Émile Blanche, to which Proust collaborates: it is published in the *Écho de Paris* on April 15, and Proust pays several newspapers (500 francs to *Le Figaro*) to print further "echoes" of its most laudatory passages.

So much for business. 1914 is the year of the drowning of the beloved chauffeur, Alfred Agostinelli, following the crash of his plane (a gift from Proust) in the sea off Antibes: the single letter from Proust to Agostinelli in this volume is written on May 30, the very day of the tragedy. 1914 is the year, also, of the murder, on March 16, of Proust's friend Gaston Calmette, editor of *Le Figaro*, by Mme Cail-laux, wife of a cabinet minister whom Calmette had attacked in print. On July 30 comes her astonishing acquittal: Proust is among those who send messages of sympathy to Calmette's family.

And 1914 is—the atrocious year. For years before the murder at Sarajevo there had been the heightening of international tension, exchanges of provocation, and refutations of conciliations, of a kind all too familiar to readers in the 1980s. Proust's brother, Dr Robert Proust, is called up on August 2: Proust accompanies him to the Gare de l'Est. Soon from the front comes the news that a German bomb has exploded in the operating room where the doctor is working: he is miraculously unhurt, and is "cité à l'ordre du jour, pas pour cela, mais pour tant d'autres choses courageuses qu'il ne cesse de faire". "Les obus tombaient sur la table d'opération": nothing is said of the patient.

Many letters go to the composer Reynaldo Hahn in the army, begging him to desist from seeking transfer from his safe post in Albi to

that of bicycle messenger at the front. Proust, who in youth had enjoyed his year of military service, is now hopelessly asthmatic; nevertheless fears conscription: and all his doctors are called on for certification of his unfitness. To Lionel Hauser he writes repeatedly about his investments, which he himself has handled desplorably and which are of course affected by events. Paris is bombarded—an experience Proust will characterize in a revelatory passage of his novel as "Pompéi par fragments, chaque soir." For a time, accompanied by the faithful Céleste Alharet and a Swedish valet, he seeks refuge at the Grand Hôtel in Cabourg. Most of the building is a military hospital; he remains there five or six weeks, distributing gifts to the wounded before leaving. Lists of casualties "au champs d'honneur" fill the newspaper columns; as one may imagine, Proust's letters of condolence are sublime.

But, as always, even in this wartime volume, it is the passages on art and society that particularly enthral. Writing to André Chaumet, apparently referring to reviewers who have criticized *Swann* for "having no plan", he wonders: supposing *L'Éducation sentimentale* were to appear today—would it be found to have a "plan"? To Émile Straus, about the sordid behaviour of Agostinelli's relatives, eager to get their hands on the money he was carrying when he drowned: "Ces choses-là, si affreuses qu'elles soient, arrivent journellement chez les Rochevoucaud ou les Mostomereoy dès qu'une question d'intérêt se présente." Again to Émile Straus, a curious remark: "Il est vrai que la culture n'est guère plus nécessaire que suffisante à l'éclosion du talent." Best of all, perhaps, to Daniel Halévy about a war story Halévy had written and published in the *Journal des Débats* for November 17:

[La lundi soir novembre 1914]

Cher ami

Ces quelques mois pour te dire que c'est en pleurant que j'ai lu *Les Trois Croix*. En ce temps où il y a tant de sublimité dans les faits, et si peu dans les paroles et les écrits, où chacun annonce que la

Gaerre a transformé les esprits, mais l'annonce dans un style qui montre trop qu'elle n'a rien transformé du tout, où les mêmes sottises, les mêmes banalités reviennent, soit pires encore, soit semblant telles par leur confrontation aux grandes choses qu'elles s'imaginent exprimer, ce ce temps où on ne peut lire un journal sans dégoût, et où peut-être pas une ligne décente n'a encore été écrite sur la guerre, je crois que les *Trois Croix* sont le premier morceau de la littérature guerrière (ne le froisse pas du mot littérature qui ou sans où je le prends et où tu l'entends j'espère est fort obole) qu'il m'ait été donné de lire.

Que des choses j'aurais à te dire à un moment où jamais le désarmement des jouteurs n'a été si facile.

Ton bien ému et admiratif

Marcel Proust

Most of Halévy's article, or story, is given to us in a footnote on page 332. It is brief and intense. Philip Keel does well to reprint it. But then Keel does everything well here. In the amplitude, tone, and interest of its notes, indeed in its entire presentation, this volume is masterly—as are all its predecessors. What has developed is the quality of the letters themselves. Maturity, artistic growth, the nurture of his own genius, the preface of personal tragedy and apocalyptic public event, all combine to bring from Proust an authentically only intermittently present in the earlier correspondence.

*Pleasures and Regrets*, a collection of Proust's early tales and sketches was entitled *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* when it was published, with a preface by Anatole France, in Paris in 1896. (Proust was twenty-five.) Louise Varese's translation, with its altered title, first appeared in 1949; the present edition is a reprinting of a 1949 American reprint published by the Ecco Press in New York last year. D. J. Enright has added an informative preface (not present in the American reprint), which sympathetically emphasizes the book's chief interest today: its early sounding, here and there, of themes grandly treated in *Remembrance*. These tales often possess an immaturity, very fin-de-siècle charm, and at times hint at the power to come.

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## On the buses

Patrick Renshaw

**KEN FULLER**  
*Radical Aristocrats: London busworkers from the 1880s to the 1980s*  
256pp. Lawrence and Wishart. Paperback, £4.95.  
085315 6492

This study of the trade-union activities of London bus-workers is written by a former bus-driver, now a full-time official in the Transport and General Workers Union. Ken Fuller regards London bus-workers as "radical aristocrats" because, though not really members of the skilled trades which labour historians commonly call the "labour aristocracy", they shared many of their characteristics, and were always militant socialists.

Starting with the horse-drawn era of the 1880s, Fuller identifies what was distinctive about the bus-workers both then and later. Long hours were mitigated by comparatively high earnings. Conductors, for example, could make as much as £4 or £5 a week, which was then a large sum. The author's explanation of this is intriguing. Before the introduction of ticket-machines, conductors, with their employer's connivance, customarily kept back part of the fares they collected for distribution among the entire workforce, not just drivers but horse-keepers and water-men. In a sense, the proprietors were hiring out their omnibuses to those who worked them, and it was this element of self-employment which characterized the Inhour aristocracy.

Such independence might have inhibited the growth of trade unions, with their emphasis on collective action, but the garages the workers were organized into provided the perfect setting for the growth of union activity based on a sense of class solidarity. Their early union, known as the "red button" union, was influenced by syndicalism in the years of labour unrest before the First World War, and by socialism and communism when it merged with Ernest Bevin's new TGWU in the 1920s. Yet the busmen were plagued by weakness too. The tramworkers belonged to a separate

organization, known as the "blue button" union, and the rival colours were not without their political significance. After amalgamation with the mighty TGWU, tramworkers, and trolleybus workers too, were not part of the London bus section and were often strongly in opposition to it, while underground railway workers, like those on the metropolitan surface railways, belonged to a different union. So if the London bus section stood out nationally in providing the rest of the working class with militant, politically conscious leadership, like the coal miners they always found themselves acting alone, notably in the three big strikes of 1933, 1937 ("the Coronation strike") and 1958.

Of course, they acted in common with the rest of organized labour during the 1926

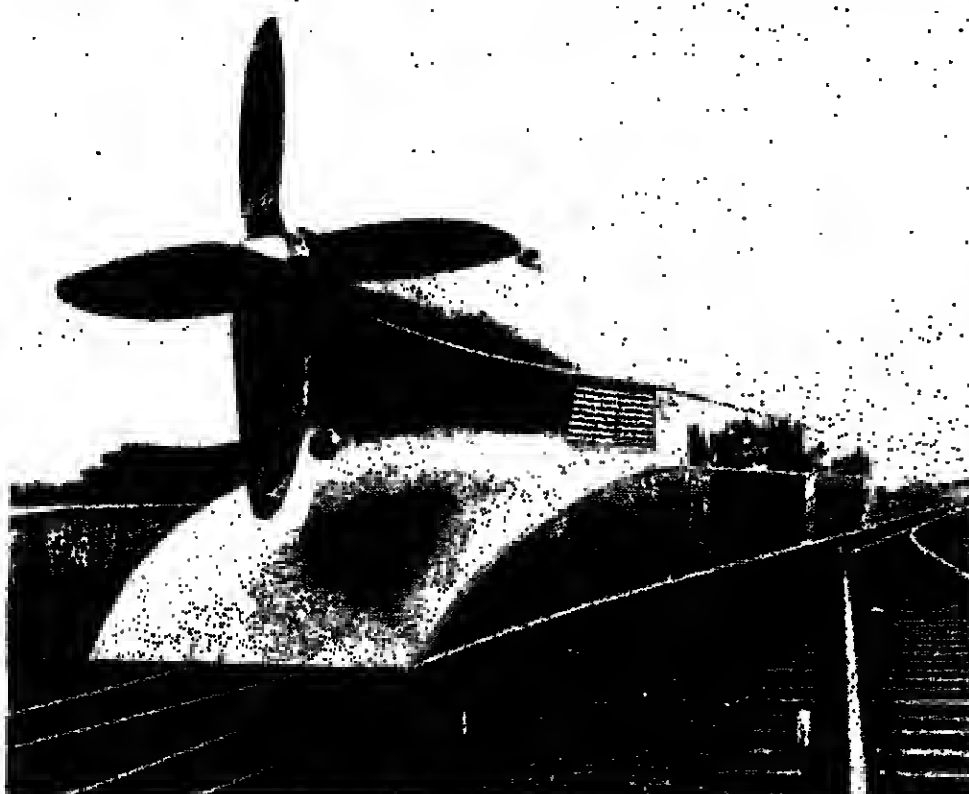
General Strike. After its defeat, and the overtures to class collaboration made by Bevin and others in the 1928 Mond-Turner talks, London busmen took the lead in reviving union rank-and-file (RFM) militancy in the 1930s. It was gratified to read Fuller's judgment that the London busworkers' RFM was "the most effective such organization of its kind the British trade union movement has ever seen", as well as his favourable comments on the rank-and-file journals, the *Busman's Punch* and the *Platform*, which my father edited.

*Busman's Punch*, with its distinctive punching-flat logo, orchestrated and reported these activities, which often alarmed Bevin and the right-wing leadership of the TGWU. Yet the failure of the 1937 strike, and then the

special circumstances of the war, brought this phase to a close. In the post-war period busmen (and buswomen) faced a changed world. Arthur Deakin, who succeeded Bevin as boss of the TGWU, used the Cold War as a pretext for banning communists from union office; so out went Bill Jones and the whole of the 1930s leadership. They simply re-formed behind the *Platform*, which unlike *Busman's Punch* had no CP connection and never tried to form another RFM. Yet it was, in Jones's view, "the best rank-and-file paper in my experience" and achieved an astonishing 18,000 sale by the mid-1950s.

By then, the rapid spread of the motor-car was drastically reducing passengers and receipts, which in turn led to higher fares and falling traffic. London busmen, once top of the pay league, slumped to near the bottom. Yet in the 1958 strike they found themselves once more acting alone. In the 1960s the Phelps Brown inquiry into London transport came down substantially on the busmen's side. Problems mounted in the 1970s, until the bold "Fares Fair" policy succeeded briefly in breaking the vicious circle of falling revenue, decreasing services, higher fares and lower real wages. Now abolition of the GLC and London Transport opens up new prospects for crisis.

*Radical Aristocrats*, based on limited sources, fills an important gap and tells a fascinating tale. I would take issue with the author on a number of points. Did the 1937 strike "fail" when the employers finally settled so close to union demands? The origins of Deakinism and anti-communism are crudely oversimplified. Moreover, though Fuller notes that no RFM or wider political campaign was tried in the 1950s, he does not explain why. The answer, surely, is that in the new political climate it was more affective not to. The recipe for successful campaigning, as he notes elsewhere, was to learn to talk with the busmen and not to them, which was why the CP and other sectarian groups always failed. The campaign against the employment of West Indian and Maltese busmen surely contained some racism among the rank-and-file, which the book fails to acknowledge; and there is really nothing about busmen's reaction to woman workers.



An experimental train designed by Hans Kruckenberg and built for the German State railways in 1930; reproduced from *Thirties: Style and design 1927-1934* by Klaus-Jürgen Sembach (175pp, with 126 plates. Thames and Hudson, £8.95, 0 500 264177), recently reissued in paperback.

## Provide, provide

John Burnett

**PAUL JOHNSON**  
*Saving and Spending: The working-class economy in Britain, 1870-1939*  
250pp. Oxford: Clarendon. £25.  
019 622933 X

In the years before the modern Welfare State, those who could afford to protect themselves against the misfortunes of life saved, and those who could not or would not save, borrowed as long as anyone would lend. At least until the Second World War the working-class economy, especially at the lower end, was frail and precarious, the line between respectability and destitution easily broken by a spell of unemployment, an illness, a death or another birth. This much is well known to those who have looked below the surface of the Victorian "golden age" or the inter-war "mass market", but what Paul Johnson does – and succeeds in doing interestingly and on the whole convincingly – is to put statistical flesh on the framework of institutions by which our forefathers tried to keep the wolves from the door. What comes over from this very good study is both how widespread working-class saving was in extent, and how pitifully small it was individually. In 1911, for example, when the first National Insurance Act was being debated in Parliament, the average adult working-class family per head was estimated at £11.2s 0d; two months of sickness or unemployment could render this averagely prudent and wealthy family completely destitute.

How, why and to what extent did working people save? Writing in 1839, the apostle of thrift and self-help, Samuel Smiles, concluded that three chief (temporal) contingencies for which men should provide were "want of employment, sickness and death", and of these the first was rated the most impor-

tant. The Victorian celebration of death by means of a "respectable" funeral and a public display of grief and mourning was a social obligation felt by every class of society down to the poorest, and given the high mortality rates, especially of infants and children, it was an expensive event likely to recur several times within the lifetime of a family. Even in 1870 the average cost of burying a working-class child was £2 2s 0d and for an adult £5 9s 0d, a sum which had risen to £22 by 1937. Such large expenses, equivalent to several weeks' gross earnings, could best be met by burial insurance taken out with an Industrial Assurance Company or a Friendly Collecting Society for a penny or two a week. In 1914 these accounted for a staggering 36 million paid-up policies, though given multiple membership it is impossible to say how many individuals this represented. Social surveys between the wars, however, found that in York, Bristol and Glasgow more than eight out of ten working people carried death insurance – not for a large capital sum, but for the few pounds required for their decent disposal.

After death, sickness was the eventuality most frequently insured against, though by a significantly smaller proportion. Membership of the great Friendly Societies like the Oddfellows, the Foresters or the Buffaloes was essentially the badge of the skilled worker or, at least, of the worker in a "safe" job who could set aside from 6d to 1s a week to secure medical attendance and sick pay. Membership probably covered around 40 per cent of the adult male population in 1911 and somewhat less in 1931, but the Friendly Societies, with their club nights and outings, their regalia, rituals and parades, were social institutions which conferred status, not mere sick clubs. In that respect, their role was closer to that of the trade unions, who were the sole providers of unemployment insurance before the state schemes began. Lloyd George in 1911, believed that

"not a tenth of the working classes have made any provision at all" against unemployment, using this as an argument to introduce state insurance in a group of seasonal trades. It is even more surprising to find that old age came at the bottom of the list of insurance priorities; even in the late 1930s only a quarter of a million manual workers were covered by occupational pension schemes. "Working men do not believe in deferred benefits", reported a director of the Oddfellows, "they do not think they will live long enough to receive them."

For more immediate, and more predictable, needs, cash accumulation was more popular with those whose incomes allowed any margin over essential expenditure. Savings banks – particularly the Post Office and the Trustee Savings Bank – grew considerably in importance in working-class life, the number of depositors rising from 2½ million in 1870 to 11 million in 1914 and 14 million by 1939. Accounts tended to be short-run, typically closed annually to buy new clothes, bedding or a summer holiday; similarly, the members of co-operative societies often left their quarterly dividends to accumulate for such purposes, and were prepared to pay high prices for the benefit of a "divi" which might be as much as 3s in the pound.

Below these, the comfortable artisans and the sober, industrious working-classes who had inhibited the gospel according to Smiles, were the "undeserving" poor whose lives were lived on the margin of subsistence, falling into and climbing out of petty debt from week to week and from day to day. For them there existed a range of credit institutions from the corner shop and the Coal, Boot, Goose and Christmas Clubs to the Scotch Draper, the unlicensed "dolly" shop and the licensed pawnshop. In 1914 no fewer than 230 million pledges were made, equivalent to six for every man, woman and child in the country or one a fortnight for every working-class family. Although enormous rates of interest accrued on these small

borrowings, they afforded a life-support system which could be manipulated with financial wizardry by the cognoscenti. In *Chelita Child* Rose Gamble describes how her mother, with no home and no money, set about raising the advance rent required for new lodgings. She began by borrowing 1s from the street moneylender at 1d a day interest. With this she obtained a pair of sheets at 15s from the credit draper, immediately pawning them for 76d; the rent advance was then paid; the moneylender repaid, and 5d left over. (There was, of course, a shilling a week to be paid for the sheets.)

Those who condemned the poor for their improvidence viewed the growth of state welfare provisions with alarm. Lord Wynne warned the supporters of Old Age Pensions in 1908 that

"you will establish a system of demoralization amongst the working classes, you will do away with thrift, families will cease to regard it as an obligation to maintain those of their members whose working days are passed, and self-reliance will be diminished."

In view of some contemporary reasoning it is worth reflecting on Johnson's estimate that between 1906 and 1936 adult working-class assets in "small saver" institutions grew threefold in real terms, lending no support to the opinion that state welfare inhibited saving. What emerges from this study is the paradox that the chief enemy of thrift was uncertainty: while the middle classes could set aside 10 per cent of their income for saving in the confidence of being able to enjoy it one day, many working-class people only found it worthwhile to do so after some of the worst risks had been removed.

There is one quibble with this title and the content of this important and readable book. It is not really a history of Saving and Spending, but of Saving and Borrowing. The full story of working-class spending has yet to be told.

## Westward the course of empire

Marc Raeff

**JOHN L. H. KEEP**  
*Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and society in Russia 1462-1874*  
Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.  
019822575 X  
**WILLIAM C. FULLER, JR**  
*Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia 1861-1914*  
299pp. Princeton University Press. £28.40.  
068104525 2

The expansion of the small and obscure principality of Muscovy into the largest contiguous land empire ever known could not have taken place without a resort to force – that is, without a large and effective military establishment. There is an extensive literature in the tradition of the world, dealing with the history of Russian regimes, campaigns, commanders and so on. Yet surprisingly, in view of its central importance in the country's history, the military until quite recently had received but scant attention from general historians, whether Russian or foreign, and little effort had been made to explore its connections with the social and political environment in which it had to operate.

The situation is changing, however; over the past decade or so the army, and also the navy, of imperial Russia have been increasingly studied in relation to other aspects of public life – this is true of Soviet and even more so of Western historiography. The two books under review are the first major contributions in English to our understanding of the military's role from this more general perspective.

John Keep, in his *Soldiers of the Tsar*, describes the process by which a noble militia – not unlike the *arrière ban* of medieval France – was transformed into a European or modern-type army in the reign of Peter the Great. From the time Moscow consolidated its primacy in Central European Russia, the main task of its military apparatus was to fight in and against the steppe. Two instruments were employed: a line of fortified posts (*cheras*) to secure the border and to be used to extend it, and a motley class of military servants (loosely and not quite accurately called nobles) who, in return for grants of settled and cultivated land (*pomestie*), were to be called up whenever needed.

These instruments worked well as long as Moscow's attention was directed mainly to the east and south-east. But when, in the second half of the sixteenth century, Ivan IV (the Terrible) turned Moscow's policy westwards, Russia became involved in a protracted struggle against Livonia, Poland and Sweden that lasted well into the seventeenth century, and necessitated the creation of new types of military formations. Thus originated the musketeers (*strel'tsy*) – a well-nigh hereditary, market-firing infantry that was garrisoned in towns and allowed to engage in artisanal and trading activities. It was inevitable that such a corps should become embroiled in social and economic conflicts and play an active role in the dynastic political crises of the seventeenth century, while its usefulness on the battlefield steadily declined. By the middle of the seventeenth century the so-called "New Model regiments" had also been created; they were patterned on western European infantry and based on artillery units of professional mercenaries, offered in large part by foreigners. Thanks to these troops – with the support of the *strel'tsy*, the traditional militia, and the Cossacks – Moscow could extend its frontiers westward, incorporate the Left Bank Ukraine (and Kiev), and force a "perpetual peace" on a weak Poland.

But the cost of the New Model regiments' high and the cumbersome machinery of such diverse types of units was not adequate to the goals of expansion and active involvement in European affairs that Peter I had set himself against Sweden. In fact Peter completely restructured the army; the resulting military system remained in place until the disaster of the Crimean War, after which thoroughgoing reform provided the framework of a new imperial military establishment lasting until 1917.

To fill the lower ranks of Peter's professional, "national" army the peasant population was subjected to conscription for a term of twenty-

five years, that is, virtually for life. The Russian peasants bore a disproportionate share of the burden, the non-Russian peoples of the empire being either exempted or made to furnish special auxiliary units. The Peterine regimen imposed compulsory, permanent and life-long service on the Muscovite nobility, with promotion depending on merit and longevity, and it also made a minimum level of European-type education a prerequisite.

The lot of the common soldiers in the *ancien régime* armies was not an enviable one, and, as Professor Keep so well illustrates, that of the Russian conscript was even less so. One feature, however, that not only held the regiments together but made for a significantly successful fighting force can be readily singled out: the regimental economy, of which Keep gives a most useful sketch. The regimental commander was the conduit for the equipment and rations provided by the government (which, as a matter of course, led to abuses and corruption). But a large part of the soldier's requirements – clothing, personal equipment, meals – was produced in the companies of the regiment. This regimental economy – whose basic unit was the company – engaged much of the soldiers' time and energies. The soldiers' association (*aretel*) was similar to the village commune (*mir*) and allowed for a degree of independence and some scope for initiative and enterprise. One thing seems clear: it served as a powerful social cement; added to a common religion and language, the company *aretel* gave the Russian soldier the sense of community that made him such a resilient opponent. The regimental economy survived the reforms of the 1870s and remained a distinctive and significant feature of the Russian army into the twentieth century.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the army was used to put down revolts of peasants and frontier populations – the most dramatic instance was the crushing of the Pugachev rebellion, 1773-4. In the nineteenth century, too, the army was frequently called out to deal with peasant unrest. The practice took on new and unforeseen dimensions in the early twentieth century. William C. Fuller in *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia 1861-1914* is particularly illuminating about this story – he brings important correctives and clarifications to the clichés popularized by the radical press that have permeated historical literature.

Professor Fuller shows that the creation of a nationally conscripted army in the 1870s put in question its role as peacekeeper and suppressor of rural and urban unrest. A professional officer corps trained to fight foreign wars did not savour this domestic role, while a soldiery drawn from the population at large and serving for a limited time could not be relied upon to perform in it without serious political consequences. The army, very much against the better judgment of the ministry of war and the field commanders, was called out to crush the revolutionary outbreaks of the first decade of the twentieth century. It did so by means of punitive expeditions against unruly peasants and brutal suppression of urban violence.

The military also had to deal with civilians suspected or accused of violence against the régime. Military tribunals – and after 1905 also extraordinary field courts martial – had to deal with such cases according to military law in time of war. Not unexpectedly, the sentences were harsh; several hundred death sentences were carried out in the immediate post-revolutionary period. This ministry of war viewed these involvements of the army not only as serious interferences with the training programme and a drain on its resources, but also as contributing to the increasing unpopularity of the military in society, and as such undermining the army's primary task of external defence. Eventually the army's viewpoint prevailed, and between 1908 and 1914 its role in domestic repression and civilian justice steadily declined. These chapters of Fuller's book should be required reading for all scholars concerned with the history of the Russian working class and of the revolution of 1905.

From the time of Peter the Great the army became a major educational institution, with the establishment of the Academy of Mathematics and Navigation and the Corps of Cadets, which disseminated general education among the Russian service nobility in the eight-

eenth century and specialized technical instruction to a broader student body in the nineteenth. This was accompanied by the absorption, albeit selective, of European ideas concerning society and politics. The contrast between European ideas and Russian reality stimulated questioning and criticism which generated, first the hope, and then the demand, that something be done to eliminate the worst abuses and evils of Russia's social, economic and cultural condition. Thus arose what Keep aptly calls a "military intelligentsia" that shared fully the interests and concerns of its civilian counterparts.

Fuller also devotes much attention to this development, which resulted in the emergence of a military professional culture – a culture imbued with a sense of duty and civic responsibility. Yet its very professionalism made it suspect to the civilian radical intelligentsia. The latter saw the military more and more as the obedient tool of the hated imperial régime, unable to keep pace with the growing modernization and sophistication of Russian society. Its role in the revolution of 1905 compounded this image. As a consequence the army developed what Fuller calls a "negative corporatism", a siege mentality that insisted on outward status trappings (honour, uniforms, duels) and reacted negatively to anything that seemed even remotely to cast an aspersions on its character and role. It turned the army – as a "corporation" – into an inertly conservative institution, obstructive of social and political reforms.

This brings us to the last important question taken up by these two masterly studies: the relationship of the imperial army to the political system and its opponents. It is by no means an easy problem to disentangle, and for all their knowledge, analytical sophistication, and balanced judgment, Keep and Fuller have only taken the first step; although Professor Fuller, dealing with a shorter time span, has been able to probe more deeply on the basis of the interesting archival documentation (by no means complete, however) that he was fortunate enough to obtain in the Soviet Union.

Keep, correctly in my opinion, plays down the role of the army as an institution in the palace coups of the eighteenth century, even though officers were involved; military and civilian domains were not yet rigidly separated, and the Guards regiments offered logistic support to throne a candidate (curiously, always a woman). Later on, Keep argues, the military intelligentsia tried to resort to what he labels a "praetorian option" in the abortive revolt of December 1825. He presents a great deal of interesting evidence and observations drawn from recent Soviet and Western scholarship in defence of his interpretation, although he admits that it is very tentative. In any event, in the reign of the obdurate martinet Nicholas I, the army "marked time" (Keep's phrase) and was not allowed to modernize in preparation for a confrontation with Western Powers, such as took place in the Crimea in the middle of the century.

Naturally, the question of the relationship

between the civil and military establishments arose as soon as the two ceased to be identical or overlapping. In addition, Russia's rapid socio-economic transformation after 1861 was bound to provoke intense competition for the limited resources available. Fuller provides useful facts and figures on the share which military expenditures had in the total state budget and on the per capita cost of the army. His evaluation of the available data and comparable figures for the major West European powers is especially illuminating: the total outlay in Russia was greater but the per capita burden lower.

The major conflict was between the ministry of the interior and the ministry of war over the role of the army's involvement in civilian matters and control, while the military budget produced acrimonious clashes with the ministry of finance. Professor Fuller gives a comprehensive picture of the interministerial rivalry, as well as of the relations with the Duma and political parties, which proved crucial for the reform of the imperial army after the defeats in Asia and the turmoil of revolution. It is quite clear from his account that the army would have preferred not to get involved in the First World War, for it needed a longer breathing-space to recuperate.

If in 1914 the army was not adequately prepared, either materially or psychologically, it was not entirely due to any one of the factors so far mentioned. Fuller makes it clear that the Sovereign proved in the end to be the decisive factor. Indeed, Nicholas II not only saw himself as the titular commander in chief but took a direct interest in its management, although he concerned himself mainly with the externals rather than basic issues. He also supported the grand dukes, members of his family, who, by virtue of their command positions, involved themselves in all things military. This meddling by incompetent Romanovs exacerbated the discontent of the military intelligentsia and the "Young Turk" reformers (as well as civilian leaders). The minister of war, in particular General Sukhomlinov, had to secure the monarch's support in his conflicts with other ministries and the Duma, but at the price of acquiescing in the Tsar's appointments and prejudices. This state of affairs goes a long way to explaining the incompetence of Russia's leadership in the First World War. It ended in the army's disaffection from the monarch and his régime; little wonder that the military forced the abdication of Nicholas II after the government lost control of St Petersburg.

Professor Keep and Professor Fuller have done an admirable job in putting the history of Russia's army in its proper socio-political and intellectual perspectives; they have also suggested the right approach for discussing the Russian case in comparative terms. The two books will be an indispensable guide to all subsequent researchers in Russian military history. Both are a pleasure to read for their clarity, straightforward style, balanced judgments, and sympathetic understanding of all the participants in the history of the military establishment of imperial Russia.

### THE CHARTERS OF THE ANGLO-NORMAN EARLS OF CHESTER

edited by Geoffrey Barraclough

A MAJOR FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION OF THE RECORD SOCIETY OF LANCAIRE AND CHESHIRE.

The Society intends to publish, in the summer of 1987, a critical edition of the charters of the earls of Chester (c. 1071-1237) by the late Professor Geoffrey Barraclough. Professor Barraclough's work has been eagerly awaited by medieval historians since the publication of his *Feudalism in Early Cheshire Charters* in 1957. The volume will contain the Latin texts of over 460 documents, accompanied by brief English summaries, details of provenance, and extensive notes and comments. The Anglo-Norman earls of Chester were important both as local feudal lords and as national figures, and the charters are thus a vital primary source for the study of the political, social, economic and ecclesiastical history of the period. Although Cheshire charters are naturally predominant, over half the charters of England figure in the text, as do the earls' interests in Normandy.

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